Quiet Talks on Following The Christ

S. D. Gordon

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QUIET TALKS
ON
Following The Christ

BY

S. D. GORDON

Author of
"Quiet Talks on Power," "Quiet Talks on Prayer,"
"Quiet Talks on Our Lord's Return," etc.

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INTRODUCTION

These talks have been given, in substance, at various gatherings in Great Britain, Continental Europe, and parts of the Far East, during the past four years. The simple directness of the spoken word has been allowed to stand. Portions of chapters three, four, six, and eight have appeared at various times in "The Sunday School Times."

If any who read may find some practical help through the Master's gracious touch upon these simple words, they are earnestly asked to add their prayers that that same gracious touch may be felt by others wherever these talks may go.

THE LONE MAN WHO WENT BEFORE

A Call to Friendship.

One day I watched two young men, a Japanese and an American, pacing the deck of a Japanese liner bound for San Francisco. Their heads were close together and bent down, and they were talking earnestly. The Japanese was saying, "Oh, yes, I believe all that as a theory, but is there *power* to make a man *live* it?"

He was an officer of the ship, one of the finest boats on the Pacific. The American was a young fellow who had gone out to Japan as a government teacher, and when his earnest sort of Christianity led to his dismissal he remained, and still remains, as a volunteer missionary. With his rare gift in personal touch he had won the young officer's confidence, and was explaining what Christianity stood for, when the Japanese politely interrupted him with his question about power. The tense eagerness of his manner and voice let one see the hunger of his heart. He had high ideals of life, but confessed that every time he was in port, the shore temptations proved too much, and he always came back on board with a

feeling of bitter defeat. He had read about Christianity and believed it good in theory. But he knew nothing of its power.

Through his new American friend he came into personal touch with Christ, then and there. And up to the day we docked he put in his spare time bringing other Japanese to his friend's stateroom, and there more than one of them knelt, and came into warm touch of heart with the Lord Jesus.

Just so our Lord Jesus draws men, Oriental and Occidental alike. Just so He drew men when He was down here. He had great drawing power. Men came eagerly wherever they could find Him.

He drew all sorts of men. He drew the Jews, to whom He belonged racially. He drew the aggressive, domineering Romans, and the gentler cultured Greeks. He drew the half-breed Samaritans, who were despised by both Jew and foreigner, as not being either one thing or the other. The military men and the civilians, the cultured and the unlettered, the official class and those in private life, all alike felt the strong pull upon their hearts of His presence.

The pure of heart, like gentle Mary of Bethany, and the guileless Nathanael, were drawn to Him. And the very opposite, those openly bad in their life, couldn't resist His presence, and the call away from their low, bad level, but eagerly took His hand and came up. Fisherfolk and farmers, dwellers in the city and country, schol-

ars and tradesmen, crude and refined, richly clad and ragged,—all sorts contentedly rubbed elbows and jostled each other in the crowds that came to listen, and stayed to listen longer, and then went away to come back again for more.

This was why He came—to draw men to Himself. Our Lord Jesus was the face of God looking longingly into men's faces. And they couldn't withstand the appeal of that gentle strong face. He was the voice of God talking into men's ears; and the music of that low, quiet voice thrilled and thralled their hearts. He was the hand of God, strong and warm, reaching down to take men by the hand and give them a strong lift up and back to the old Eden life. And, in time, as men put their hand in His, they came to feel the little knotted place in the palm of that outstretched hand, and the feel of it went strangely into their inmost being. He was the heart of God, tender and true, beating rhythmically in time and tune with the human heart. And the music had, and has, strange power of appeal to human hearts, and power to sway human lives like a great wind in the trees.

Our Lord Jesus was the person of God in human shape and human garb, come down close, to draw us men back again to the old trysting place under the Tree of Life. And in every generation, and every corner of the earth, then, and ever since then, men of every colour and sort have come back, and found how His presence

eases the tug of life on many a steep roadway, and more, much more.[1]

And our Lord Jesus drew men into personal friendship with Himself. He didn't like the long range way of doing things. Keeping men at arm's length never suited Him. He gave the inner heart touch, and He longed for the touch of the innermost heart. He was our friend. He asked that we be His friends, real friends of the rare sort, of which one's life has only a few.

And He asked, too, that all else that we brought to Him should be that which grew out of this personal friendship. He gave and did all that He did and gave, because He was our friend. He asked only for what grew out of a real heart friendship with Himself. He longed to have us give all, yet only what our hearts couldn't hold back. His friendship has one thing peculiar to itself. He has no favourites, in our common thought of that word, among the countless numbers who have come to be included in His inner circle of friends. Yet He gives to each such a distinctive personal touch of His own heart that you feel yourself to be on closest terms. He is nearer and closer than any other, and your longing is to be as near and close to Him in life as He is to you in His heart.[2]

[1] John i. 1, 2, 14, 18; Colossians i. 15; II Corinthians iv. 4; Philippians ii. 6; Hebrews i. 3.

[2] John xv. 15; Psalm xxv. 14; Isaiah xli. 8; II Chronicles xx. 7; James ii. 23.

Now, because we are His friends and He is our friend, He calls us to follow Him. It is a privilege of friendship. He would share with you and with me the things of His own heart and life. He wants to have us come close up to Himself, and live close up. And the only way we can do it is by giving a glad "Yes" to His invitation, and following so close that we shall be up to Himself. Nothing less than this contents His longing.

But there is more than friendship here. He has a plan of action in His heart. It is a wide-reaching plan, clear beyond our idea of what wide-reaching means. It is nothing less than a plan for the whole world, the entire race, for winning it up to the old Eden life of purity and of close walking with God. That plan is the passion of His great heart. He has held nothing back—spared nothing—that it might be done. He is thinking of that plan as He comes eagerly to you and me, now, all afresh, and with His heart in His voice says "Follow Me." This is a bit of His plan for me and for you—that we shall be partners with Him in His plan for the world.

And yet—and yet—this helping Him, this partnership, this working with Him in His plan, is to be because of our friendship, His and mine, His and yours. It is a more than friendship He is thinking of. But that more is *through* the friendship. It grows out of the friendship. Only so does it work out His real plan.

Climbing the Hilltops.

Now this "Follow Me" of His, if taken into one's life, and followed up, will come to mean two things. There are two great things that stand sharply out in our Lord Jesus' life down here, His *characteristics* and His *experiences.* I mean what He was in Himself; and what He went through, suffered, enjoyed, and accomplished; the Man Himself, and the Man's experiences. These are the two things about which these simple talks will be grouped. Our Lord Jesus wants us to follow that we may climb up the hill as high as He did in these things.

Following means climbing. A friend has told recently of a journey taken to a certain village in New England from which, she had been told, a fine view could be got of the White Mountains. On arrival it seemed that a low hill completely shut out the view, to her intense disappointment. But her companion, by and by, called from the top of the low hill and eagerly beckoned her to come up. A bit of climbing quickly brought her to where the magnificent beauty of the mountains broke upon her delighted eyes.

Our Lord Jesus climbed the hilltops, both in His character and in His experiences. He wants us to share those rare hilltops with Him. He has gone away ahead of any other. He is the Lone Man in both character and experiences. And in some of His experiences He will ever remain the lone occupant of the hilltop. But He

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is eager for our companionship. He longs for the personal touch. He wants us to have all He has got. He has blazed a way through the thicket where there was no path before. He left the plain marks on the trees as He went through, so we could surely find the way. And now He eagerly beckons us to follow.

But following means climbing. It's a hill road, sometimes down hill, sometimes up hill. Which makes stiffer climbing? Usually the one you are doing seems the harder. Sometimes the road is a dead level between hills. And dead level walking—the monotonous dead-a-way, with no bracing air, no inspiring outlook—is often much harder than down hill or up. And so it too is climbing. Following means climbing. He climbed. He made the high climb all alone. No other ever had the courage to climb so high as He. It's easier since He has smoothed down the road with His own feet; yet it isn't easy; still it is easier than not climbing; that is, when you reckon the whole thing up—with *Him* in.

Now He asks you and me to climb. He cannot climb for you. That is, I mean He cannot do the climbing you ought to do. He has climbed for us, marked out the hill path, and made it possible for us to climb up too. But the after-climbing He cannot do for us. Each must do his own climbing. So lungs grow deeper, and heart-action stronger, and cheeks clearer, and muscles firmer. Step by step we must pull up, maybe through a fog, with no view of beauty, no

bracing air yet, only His strong beckoning hand.

But those who reach up and get hold of hands with Him, and get up even to some of the lower reaches of the climb, stand with full hearts and dumb lips. They can't find words to tell the exhilaration of the climb, the bracing air, the far outlook, and, yet more, the wondrous presence of the Chief Climber, even though there's a bit of smarting of face and hands where the thorny tanglewood tore a bit as you went by.

Just now I want you to come with me for a bit of a look at the Lone Man, who has gone before. I mean at the Man Himself. We want to take a look at the characteristics of His life; what the Man was in His character.

And please understand me here. Following does not mean that we are to try to imitate these characteristics. No, it's something both simpler and easier, and deeper and better than that. It means that, as we companion with Him daily, these same traits will appear in us. It is not to be imitation simply, good as that might seem, yet always bringing a sense of failure, and that sense the thing you remember most. It is to be some One living His life in you, coming in through the open door of your will. Your part is opening up, and keeping open, listening and loving and obeying. The touchstone of the "Follow Me" life is not imitation but following; not copying but obeying; not struggle—though there will be struggle—but companionship, a

companionship which nothing is allowed to take the fine edge off of.

And please remember, too, the meaning for us sinful men of these characteristics of His. With us character is a result of choice, and then nearly always—or should I cut out that "nearly"? the earnest man in the thick of the fight finds no "nearlys"—it's always with him—character is always the result of a fight to keep to the choice decided upon.

Now with greatest reverence for our Lord Jesus, let me say, *it was so with Him.* He was as truly God as though not man. Yet He lived His life,—He insisted on living His life, on the human level.[1] He was as truly human as though not peculiarly divine. He had the enormous advantage of a virgin birth, a divine fatherhood with a human motherhood. And, be it said with utmost reverence, He needed that advantage for the terrific conflict and the tremendous task of His life, such as no other has known. But His character as a man—the thing we are to look at now—was a result of choice, and choice insisted upon against terrible odds.

This gives new meaning to His "Follow Me." He went the same sort of road that we must go. He insisted on treading *our* road. It was not one made easier for His specially prepared feet. It was the common earth road every man must go, who will. And so the way He went we can

[1] Matthew iv. 4; where the emphatic word is "man," standing in contrast with "Son of God" in verse 3.

go if we will, every step of it. By His help working through our wills, we *can,* and, please God, surely we will.

The Dependent Life.

There were *three traits in His character upward,* that is in His relation with His Father. First of all He chose to live *the dependent life.* He recognized that everything He was, and had, and could do, was received from the Father, and could be at its true best only as the Father's direct touch was upon it. This was the atmosphere in which all His human powers would do their best. He had nothing of Himself, and could do nothing of Himself. This is the plan the Father has made for human life and effort.[1] Our Lord Jesus recognized this and lived it. Our common word for this is humility. Humility is a matter of relationship. It means keeping one's relationship with the Father clear and dominant. And this in turn radically affects and controls our relationship with our fellows.

There were three degrees or steps in the dependent life He chose to live. There was the giving up part, then the accepting for Himself the plan of human life, and then accepting it even to the extent of yielding to wrong and shameful treatment, without attempting to assert His rights against such treatment. These were

[1] Acts xvii. 28; Job xii. 10; Daniel v. 23 l. c.; Psalm cxxxix. 1-16.

the three steps in His humility. In Paul's striking phrase, He "emptied out" of Himself all He had in glory with the Father before coming to the earth; He decided to come to the human level and live fully the human life of utter dependence; and He carried this to the extent of being wholly dependent on the Father for righting the wrongs done Him.[1]

This is God's plan for the human life. It is to be a dependent life. It actually is a dependent life, utterly dependent upon Him. It is to be lived so. Then only is the fragrance of it gotten. It is part of the dependent life—the true human life—that we depend on the Father for vindication when wronged, as for everything else.[2]

Our Lord Jesus chose to live this life. There was an entire absence of the self-spirit, that is the self-assertive, the self-confident spirit. There was a remarkable confidence in action, but it was confidence in His Father's unfailing response to His requests or needs. This sense of utter dependence was natural to Him; as indeed it is natural to man unhurt by sin. And then He carefully cultivated it. As He came in contact with the very opposite all around Him, He set Himself—indeed He had to set Himself—to keeping this sense of dependence untainted, unhurt by His surroundings.

[1] Philippians ii. 6-8.

[2] Romans xii. 19; Deuteronomy xxxii. 35; Psalm xciv. 1; Proverbs xx. 22; I Peter ii. 23; I Corinthians xiii. 5, second clause.

Now there were three things which naturally grew out of this dependent life, or which naturally are part of it. One was, the sense of His Father, and of His Father's presence. In a perfectly simple natural way, He was always conscious of His Father's presence. Is this the meaning—one meaning—of "blessed are the pure in heart for they shall *see God*"? And then He doubtless set Himself to cultivate this, as an offset to what He found around Him. He would quietly look up and speak to the Father in the midst of a crowd.[1] This was the natural thing to do. He was more conscious of the Father's presence than of the crowd pressing in to get near. When He was speaking to the crowd He knew the Father too was listening. He felt the Father watching as He helped the people. This was the natural thing with Him, the presence of the Father.

With this there went a second thing, the habit of getting alone to talk things over with the Father. The common word for this is prayer. Without doubt His whole outer life grew out of His inner secret talking things out with the Father. Everything was passed in review here, first of all. This naturally grew out of the consciousness of His Father's presence, and this in turn increased that consciousness. So He was in the habit of looking at everything through His Father's eyes.

And with these two, there was plainly a third

[1] John xi. 41, 42; xii. 27, 28; Luke x. 21.

thing, a settled sense of the power, the authority, of God's written Word. It was not simply that He did not question it, but there was a deep-rooted sense grown down into His very being that God was speaking in the Book, and that this revelation of Himself and His will was *the thing* to govern absolutely one's life. This points back to a study of the Book. Doubtless that Nazareth shop was a study shop too. He quoted readily and freely from all portions of the Old Testament Bible. He seemed saturated with both its language and its spirit. The basis of such familiarity would be long, painstaking, prayerful study.

These three things naturally grew out of the dependent life He had deliberately chosen to live and were a part of it. They were necessary to it. These are the lungs and the heart of the dependent life.

Now His "Follow Me" does not mean merely that we try to imitate Him in all this. We will naturally long to do so. And He is the example we will ever be eager to follow. But the meaning goes deeper than this. It means that as we really come close up in the road behind Him this will come to be the natural atmosphere of our lives. We let *Him* in, and His presence within, yielded to and cultivated and obeyed, will work this sort of thing out in our lives. We will come to recognize, and then to feel deep down in our spirit, how dependent we are upon Him in everything. We will gradually come to realize intensely that the dependent life is the true

natural life. It is God's plan. It reveals wondrously His love. It draws out wondrously our love, and radically changes the whole spirit of the life.

Poor—Except in Spirit.

Now of course all this is in sharpest contrast to the common spirit of life as men live, then and now. The spirit that dominates human life everywhere is a spirit of *in*dependence. And this seems intensified in our day to a terrific degree. There is, of course, a good independence in our dealings with our fellows. But this is carried to the extreme of independence of every one, even—say it softly—of God Himself. Criticising God, ignoring Him, leaving Him severely out so far as we are concerned,—this has become the commonplace. If for a moment He ignored us, how quickly things would go to pieces! This has come to be the dominant spirit of the whole race to a degree more marked than ever before, if that be possible.

It seems to come into life early. I have seen a little tot, whom I could with no inconvenience have tucked under my arm, walking down the road, head up in the air, breathing out an aggressive self-confidence, and defiance of all around, worthy of one of the old-time kings. And I recognized that he had simply absorbed the atmosphere in which his four brief years had been lived.

This has come to be the inbred spirit of mankind. Everywhere this proud, self-assertive, self-sufficient, self-confident, self-aggressive spirit is found, in varying degree. It is coupled sometimes with laughable ignorance; sometimes with real learning and wisdom and culture. It is emphasized sometimes the more by school training, and other such advantages. But through all these accidental things it remains,—the dominant human characteristic. The chief letter in man's alphabet is the one next after h, spelled and written with a large capital. The yellow fever—the fever for gold—so increasingly epidemic, is at heart a bit of the same thing. The money gives power, and power gives a certain *in*dependence of others, and then a certain compelling of others to be dependent on the one who has the money and wields the power. Men everywhere say just exactly what they are specially warned against saying, "*my* power and the might of *my* hand hath gotten me this wealth." They forget the words following this in the old Book of God. "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is *He* that giveth thee power to get wealth." [1]

This seems to be the picture that underlies that phrase, "poor in spirit," which the Master declared to be so blessed.[2] He is trying to woo men away from the thing that is dominating those all around Him. I have puzzled a good bit over the phrase to find out just what was in the Mas-

[1] Deuteronomy viii. 17, 18. [2] Matthew v. 3.

ter's mind. Emphasizing the word "spirit" seems to bring out the meaning. The blessedness is not in being poor, but in a certain spirit that may control a man. We are all poor in everything except spirit.

The last degree of poverty is to be a pauper. Now, the simple truth is that we are all—every last man of us—paupers in everything. We haven't a thing we haven't got from some one else. We are beneficiaries to the last degree, dependent on the bounty of Another. We are paupers in life itself. Our life came to us in the first instance from the creative Hand, through the action of others, and it is being sustained every moment by the same Hand. We had nothing to do with its coming, and, while we influence our life by living in accord with certain physical laws, still the life itself is all the time being supplied to us directly by the same unseen Hand.

We are paupers in ability, in virtue, in character, in fact in everything. We own nothing; we only hold it in trust. We have nothing except what some One else is supplying. What we call our ability, our genius, and so on, comes by the creative breath breathing afresh upon and through what the patient creative Hand has supplied and is sustaining. We are paupers, without a rag to our bones, or a copper in the pocket we haven't got, not having a rag to our bones; paupers in everything except——.

There is an exception. It is both pitiable and

laughable. We are enormously rich in *spirit,* in our imagination, in our thought of ourselves. Blessed are they who are as poor in spirit as they actually are in everything else. They recognize that they are wholly dependent on some One else, and so they live the dependent life, with its blessed closeness of touch with the gracious Provider. In certain institutions are placed those who imagine themselves to be in high social and official rank, and in possessions what they are not, who imagine it to such a degree that it is best that they be kept apart from others. It would seem like an extreme thing to say that these people are spirit-mirrors in which we may partly see ourselves. Yet it would be saying the truth. How laughable, if it were not so overwhelmingly pitiful, must men look to God,—without a stitch to their backs except what He has given, without a copper in their pockets except what has been borrowed from His bank, yet strutting up and down the street of life, heads held high in air, as though they owned the universe, and—if it did not sound blasphemous I could add the rest of the fact—and were doing Him a favour by running His world so skilfully! And it grieves one to the heart to note that this seems to be about as true within Church circles as without. The difference between is ever growing smaller to the disappearing point.

It was into such an atmosphere, never intenser than in Palestine and Jerusalem nineteen centuries ago, that the man Christ Jesus came. And He

had the moral daring to begin living a dependent life, the true human life, looking up gratefully to the Father's hand for everything. Was it any wonder His presence caused such a disturbance in the moral atmosphere of the world! He insisted, with the strange insistence of gentleness, on living such a life, through all the extremes that the hating world-spirit could contrive against Him. Out of such a life comes His "Follow Me." And in this He is simply calling us back to the original human life as planned by God.

Now, of course, in that first step, that great "emptying out" step, there can be no following. There He is the Lone Man, unapproachable in the moral splendour of His solitude. But from the time when He came in amongst us as Jesus, our Brother, the typical Son of man, He was marking out afresh the original road for our feet, This was the foundation trait in His character. He lived the dependent life.

A Father-pleasing Life.

The second trait in His upward relation was this—He chose to live *a Father-pleasing life.* I use those words because He used them.[1] I might say "consecrated" or "dedicated" or "surrendered" or other like words. And these are good words, but in common use we have largely lost their meaning. They are used unthinkingly for something less—much less—than they mean.

[1] John viii. 28, 29.

Perhaps if we use the phrase He used we may be able to get back to the thing He meant, and did.

There are three possible lives open to every man's choice: a bad life, in which selfishness or passion or both, either refined or coarse, rule; a good, true, natural life; and a Father-pleasing life. By a good, true, natural life I mean, just now, a really Christian life in all that that means, but lived as if there were no emergency in the world to change one's habit of life.

You know an emergency coming into a man's life makes radical changes. You go to bed to-night and ordinarily will sleep out your eight hours in comfort and quiet. If a fire break out in the house, you are up in the middle of the night, hurrying around, only partly clad, carrying out valuables, or helping turn on water, or something of this sort. Your natural arrangements for the night are all broken up by the fire. An emergency may make radical changes in one's life for a little time, sometimes for the whole life. Financial reverses may change the whole habit of one's life.

Here's a man who has a well-assured, good-sized income from his business, or his inheritance, or both. He lives in a luxuriously appointed home, with many fine pictures and works of art and curios which it is enjoyable to have. He has a choice library including some fine costly old prints and editions, and enjoys adding rare books on subjects in which he is specially interested. He belongs to some literary and

social and athletic clubs. He has an interesting family growing up around him whose education is being carefully looked after. He is an earnest Bible-loving Christian, faithful in church attendance and church duties, pure in life, and saintly in character. He gives liberally to church and benevolent objects, including foreign missions, which have become a part of the church system into which he fits. And he goes an even, contented round of life, home, church, club, recreation and so on, year in and out, holding and using the great bulk of his money for himself. I think of that as one illustration of the good, true, natural life.

Now, the Father-pleasing life is radically different in certain things. Ordinarily the two would be identical. The true natural life as originally planned for us would be the life pleasing to the Father. But something, not a part of God's plan, has broken into life, a terrible something, worse than a fire in the night, or a financial panic that sweeps away your all. Sin has wrought fearful havoc; it has made an awful emergency, and this emergency has affected the life and character of all the race, in a bad way, terribly, awfully, beyond words to tell, or imagination to depict. The whole earth is in the grip of a desperate moral emergency.

And naturally enough this emergency affects the life of any one concerned with this earth. It has affected God's life, and God's plans, tremendously. It has broken His heart with grief,

and radically changed His plans for His own life. He has made a plan for winning His world away from its rebellion, its sin, back again to purity and close touch with Himself. That plan centred around His Son, and He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up.

And that emergency, and that plan of the Father's because of the emergency, have affected our Lord Jesus' life on the earth. The whole plan of His human life was radically revolutionized by it. The emergency, the Father's plan, gripped Him. He turned away from the true, good, natural life which it would have been proper for Him as a man to have lived, and He lived another sort of life. It was an emergency life, a life fitted to His Father's plan, and so the Father-pleasing life.

He became a homeless man, with all that that means. Would any man have enjoyed home-life with all the rare home-joys, the sweetest of all natural joys, so much as He? And then the larger circle of congenial friends, the enjoyment of music, of exquisite art, the reverent study of the great questions of life, of the wonders of nature whose powers it was given man to study and cultivate and develop,[1]—it is surely no irreverence to think of Him both enjoying and gracing such a life, for such was the original plan of human life as thought out by a gracious Creator.

Instead, He had not where to lay His head,

[1]Genesis i. 26-28.

though so wearied with ceaseless toil. He fairly burned His life out those few years, early and late, ministering to the emergency-stricken crowds, healing their sick, feeding their hunger, raising their dead, comforting broken hearts, winning back sin-stained men and women, teaching the ignorant neglected multitudes, preaching the Father's yearning love, searching out the straying, ceaselessly travelling up and down, without leisure enough to sleep or to eat oftentimes, and all this despite the efforts of His kinsfolk to restrain His burning intensity.

This is what I mean by a Father-pleasing life. It was truly the consecrated life, consecrated to His Father's emergency plan for His world. It was the surrendered life, wholly given up to the one passionate plan of His Father's broken heart for His earth family.

Now, His "Follow Me" does not mean imitation. It does not mean a restless, aggressive hurrying here and there in meetings and Christian service. It means that there will be a getting so close that the sweet fever of His heart shall be caught by ours. The world-vision of His eyes shall flood ours. The passion of the Father's heart shall become the passion of our hearts. And we shall be controlled in all our lives, our holdings, our habits, *by what He tells us.* It does not mean that we will seek to be homeless as Jesus was, though it may possibly turn out to mean for some of us that we shall be homeless even as He.

But it means that we shall find out *the Father's plan for our lives.* And when it has become clear, we will set to music pitched in the joyous major our Lord's own words, "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." And then we will set our lives to that joyous music with its rare undertone of the exquisite minor. It may mean Africa for you, or China for this other one. It may mean a plainer home at home, a simpler wardrobe, a more careful use of money. It may mean a new dominant note in your preaching, and all the personal influence of your life. It may possibly mean what will seem like yet more radical changes. It certainly will mean a deepening peace within, a closer touch of fellowship with the Lord Jesus, a wholly new conception of the meaning of prayer, and a radically new experience of the power of God in our own bodies and lives, and in our touch with others. It will mean that the music of His will and ours swinging rhythmically together in all things shall sweep our lives even as the strong wind the young saplings.

This was the second trait in our Lord Jesus' character upward, He lived the Father-pleasing life. To some it will seem like a further step—a fourth step—downward in His humility. And it was. The way up is down. The down slant is the beginning of the hilltop road. Going down is the way up; downward in the crowd's estimation; upward into closer touch of sympathetic

life with God, and in reaching the true ideal of life.

The Obedient Life.

The third trait of our Lord Jesus' character upward, in relation with His Father, was that He lived *the obedient life.* This is really emphasizing what has just been said. But it is putting the emphasis on the daily habit of His life, rather than on the underneath motive. This was the daily spelling out of the first two traits. Obedience became the touchstone by which everything was tested.

The touchstone was not men's needs, deeply as that took hold of His heart, and shaped so much His life. It was not the thought of service, though never was a life so filled with eager glad service. The touchstone was not natural liking or choice, the proper instinctive reach out of His true human nature, though this would be strong in Him, the typical Son of Man. This would not be repressed as an unholy or wrong thing. It would only be given second place, or left out, as it might run across the grain of the great life-passion. With a fresh touch of awe it may truly be said: He did not come down to earth primarily to die, though He knew beforehand that this would stand out as the great one thing. The death was an item in the obedience. He came down to do His Father's will. The path of obedience led straight to the hill of the

cross, and He trod that path regardless of where it led. Obedience was the one touchstone of His life.[1] And it will be the one touchstone of His true follower's life. We shall run across this same vein of bright yellow gold, again and again, as we work on through this "Follow Me" mine.

These were the three traits of our Lord Jesus' character upward, toward His Father. They were not different because of the emergency of sin He found in the world. They would have marked His life just as fully had there been no sin. But the presence of sin caused them to change radically the whole course of the life He actually lived.

Sinless by Choice.

Then there were *two traits of character inward,* in Himself. One was His *purity.* There was the absence of everything that should not be in Him. This is the negative side, though no part of His character called for more intense positiveness. Purity means sinlessness. He was sinless. But we must quickly remember what this means, or else there may seem to be no following for us, only a wistful gazing where we cannot go. It does not mean simply this, that through His peculiar birthright there was freedom from all taint of sin.

It means more than this. Sinlessness was a

[1] Philippians ii. 8; Hebrews v. 8; Romans v. 19 l. c.; John x. 18 l. c.

matter of choice with Him, and of choice insisted upon. And, be it said reverently, no man ever had a stiffer fight to keep true to his purpose than He. He was tempted in all points like as we are. He was tempted more than we. The tempter did his best and worst; he mustered all his cunning and driving power against this Lone Man. And the temptations were real. I am not concerned over the merely academical questions of the schoolmen here. The practical side is the intense side that takes all one's strength and thought. Practically, that our Lord Jesus was really tempted, means that He could have yielded had He so chosen. That He did not meant real struggle on His part. Not, of course, that He ever wanted to yield to what was wrong, but temptation was never so subtle, and doing the right never made so difficult as for Him. He suffered in being tempted.[1]

His sinlessness meant a decision, then many a time a moist brow, a clenched hand, and set jaw, a sore stress of spirit, and deep-breathed continual prayer whose intensity down in His heart could never be fully expressed at the lips. The temptation to fail to obey, simply not to obey, when obeying meant going through a sore experience was never brought so deftly, so subtly, so repeatedly and insistently to any as to Him. Resisting not only meant the decision, but the strength of resistance against terrific strength of repeated insistence.

[1]Hebrews ii. 18.

How wondrously human this God-man was in His temptations, in His set refusals, and even more, how human in keeping free from sin. For sin is not human, letting sin in would have been a going down from the human level. This is the practical meaning of His sinlessness—choice, choice insisted upon, fighting, continual prayer, the Father's help, such as any man may have—not more.

This helps us to see how intensely practical His "Follow Me" becomes. It is not only that we will want to fight against the incoming of sin because we feel we ought to. But as we get close to Him and breathe in His spirit, there will come an inbred dislike, an intense inner loathing of sin, however refined it may be in its approach. There will be a continual coming for cleansing in the only fluid that can remove sin—His precious blood, and in the only flame that can burn it out—the fire of the Holy Spirit.[1] There will be a hardening of the set purpose to be free of sin. We can be sinless in *purpose*. There can be a growing sinlessness in actual life. And yet all experience goes to show that the nearer we actually walk with God the more we shall be conscious of the need of cleansing, the more we will talk about our Lord Jesus, and the less and still less about our attainments.

The second inward trait in our Lord Jesus was the other side of this—His positive *goodness*. I mean the presence in Him of all that

[1] Hebrews xii. 29.

should be there. This is the exact reverse or complement of the purity. It is the other half that must go with that to make a perfect character. I like to use the word "holiness" in the sense of whole-ness. He had and developed a whole life. It was fully rounded out. There was nothing lacking that should be there, even as there was nothing present that should not have been there.

There is among us a good bit of negative goodness of character. We point with pride to what we don't do of that which is bad or not good. But this is a very one-sided sort of thing. Purity and goodness together—purity and holiness, wholeness—made the perfect, completed character of our Lord. And it was so wholly through His choice, His own action, with His Father's gracious help working through His choice. And the blessed contagion of the Leader's presence will make an intense longing within to follow Him here too.

A Fellow-Feeling.

Then there were *two outward traits of character,* that is in His relations with His fellow-men, of Nazareth, of Israel, and of all the race. He had *sympathy* with men; a rare, altogether exceptional sympathy. *He felt with men* in all their feelings and needs and circumstances. His fine spirit reached into men's inner spirit, and felt their hunger and pain and longings and joys,

felt them even as they did, and the arms of His spirit went around them to help. And they felt it. They felt that He really understood and felt with them. And so sincere and brotherly was His fellow-feeling that they gladly welcomed it as from one really of themselves. To men, this Man, so lone in certain traits and experiences, was their brother, not only in His feeling with them, but in their feeling toward Him.

There's something peculiar in that word sympathy. It's a warm word. It has a soft cushion to it. It is a help word. There's something in it that makes you think of a warm strong hand helping, of a soft padding cushioning the sharp edges where they touch your flesh. It makes you think of a tender, fine spirit breathing in and through your own spirit, even as the soft south wind in the spring warms you, and the bracing mountain wind in the summer brings you new life.

Our Lord Jesus had this great trait of sympathy with His fellows. He *could* have it, for He had been through all their experiences. He knew the commonplace round of daily life so common to all the race. Nazareth taught Him that, through thirty of His thirty-three years,—ten-elevenths of His life. He knew temptation, cunning, subtle, stormy, persistent. He knew the inner longings of a nature awakening, and yet what it meant to be held down by outer circumstances. He knew the sharp test of waiting, long waiting. He knew hunger and bodily weariness, and the pinch of scanty funds. He was homeless

at a time when a home would have been most grateful. He knew what it meant to have the life-plan broken, and something else, a bitter something else thrust in its place.

And he knew, too, the sweets of human life, of human love, of the helpfulness of others' sympathy, of the Father's pleased smile, of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, of the wondrous inner peace that follows obedience in hard places, of the joys of service, of the delight of being able to sympathize. His experience ran through the whole diapason of human feelings, and so He can find a key-note in every one of its tones for the sweet rich symphony of sympathy.

There is again an exception to be noted here. There could be no fellow-feeling in choosing wrong, or in yielding to the low or base or selfish. He is the Lone Man there. Does this make all the stronger His sympathy with us in our upper reach out of such things? Surely it does. The exception makes it stand out more sharply that our Lord Jesus felt our feelings. Wherever you are, however tight the corner, or narrow the road, or lonely the way, or keen the suffering, you can always stop and say: "He was here. He was here *first,* and *most.* He understands." As you kneel and look up, you can remember that there's a Man on the throne, a fellow-man, with a human heart like mine, and like yours. He understands. He feels. With utmost reverence let it be said, there's more of God since our Lord Jesus went back. Human

experience has been taken up into the person of God.

And let me remind you again, that the "Follow Me" here will mean nothing less than fellowship in the sufferings of our fellows, fellowship to the point of radically affecting our lives. Sympathy will go deeper than a sense of pity for those less fortunate, and a giving to them a warm hand and a good lift up. The poor woman, living in a slum district, being visited by a mission visitor, spoke for the universal human heart when she said earnestly, "We don't want *things;* we want *love.*" As we get up close to our Lord Jesus there will come the indwelling in us of the spirit that controlled Him. We will see through His eyes, we will feel with His heart, our hands will reach out to grasp other human hands with the impulse of His touch upon them. We shall know the exquisite pain of real sympathy with men in need, and the great joy of sharing and making lighter their load.

When You Don't Have To.

The second outward trait of our Lord Jesus' character was *sacrifice.* This is not something different from what has been said; it is only going a step further, indeed going the last step that He could go, in both His sympathy with men and His obedience to His Father. It helps to remember what sacrifice means; not suffering merely, though it includes suffering; not priva-

tion simply, though it may include this, too. There is much suffering and privation where there is no sacrifice. Sacrifice means doing something to help some one else when it takes some of your life-blood, and when you don't have to, except the have-to of love.

Sacrifice was so woven into the very fabric of Jesus' life that wherever you cut in some of the red threads stick out. It was the never-absent undertone of His life, from earliest years until the tragic close. But the undertone rose higher and grew stronger until at the last it became the dominant, the only tone to be heard. He gave His life out on the cross that so men might be saved from the terrible result of their sin, when He didn't have to, except the have-to of His great heart.

I have spoken of sacrifice as one of the two outward, manward traits of His character. But the truth is His Calvary sacrifice faced three ways: upward, inward and outward. It faced toward the Father, for it was carrying out the Father's plan, and that lets us see not only the Father's love, but His estimate, as the world's administrator of justice, of the horribleness of the sin which He was so freely forgiving.[1] It faced in toward Himself, for it was the purity and perfection of the life poured out that gave the peculiar meaning to His death, and it was His

[1]Romans iii. 26, latter half; free reading—"that He (God) might be seen to be just and righteous in forgiving a man's sin when he trusted in Jesus."

sympathetic love that led Him up that steep hill. It faced outward, for the love of it was meant to break men's hearts and bend their stubborn wills, and so it did and has.

His sympathy—love suffering—came to have a new meaning as He went to the last extreme in His suffering. Sympathy is sometimes spoken of as putting yourself in the other's place so as to help him better. Our Lord Jesus did this. He did it as none other did, or could. He actually put Himself in our place on the cross. He experienced what would have come to us had He not taken our place. He suffered the suffering that belongs to us because of our sin. He felt the feelings that came through sin working out to its bitter end. Indeed He went beyond our own feelings here. For because He consented to suffer as a guilty sinner, we, who trust His precious blood, are spared that awful experience.

Calvary was sympathy to the extreme of sacrifice. But both words, "sympathy" and "sacrifice," get new depths of meaning at Calvary. This red shuttle thread of sacrifice will appear again and again in the fabric which His "Follow Me" weaves out for us. What a character He calls us to! What strength of friendship to insist on our coming up close to Himself! Is it possible? Surely not. He is so far beyond us. Yet there is a way, only one, the way of the dependent life, depending on Him to reproduce His own likeness in us. And our giving Him a free hand in doing it.

There is one word that could be used to cover all of this, if we only knew its full, rich, sweet meaning. That is the little understood, the much misunderstood, much belittled-in-use word, "love." All that has been said of the character of our Lord Jesus can be found inside that four-lettered word. Each trait spoken of is but a fresh spelling of love, some one side of it. Love planned the dependent life, and only love can live it truly. Love longs to please love, regardless of any sacrifice involved. Obedience is the active rhythm of love on the street of life. Purity is the inner heart of love; and the fully rounded character is the maturity of love. Sympathy is the heart of love beating in perfect rhythm with your own, and sacrifice is love giving its very life gladly out to save yours. Some day we shall know how much is meant by the sentence, "God is love."

A little child of a Christian home came one day to his mother, asking what it meant to "believe on the Lord Jesus." She thought a moment how to make the answer simple to the child, and then said, "It means thinking about Him, and loving Him." Sometime after, the little fellow was noticed sitting very quietly, apparently much absorbed in thought, and his mother said, "What are you doing, my son?" With child-like simplicity he said in a quiet tone, "I'm believing on the Lord Jesus." And a warm flush of feeling came to the mother's heart as she realized the

practical tender meaning to her son, of the word "believing."

May we be great enough to be as little children while I adapt that mother's language here: Following our Lord Jesus is thinking about Him and loving Him. As we come to know the meaning of love we shall find that following is loving. The "Follow Me" life is the love life. But we must learn the meaning of love before that sentence will grip us.

The closer we follow Him the closer we will come to knowing what love is. The nearer we get to Him the nearer we get to its meaning. We will know it as we know Him. When we come into His presence, face to face, its simple full meaning will flash upon us with a great simple surprise.

Let us follow on to know it, that we may know Him. Let us live it and so we shall live Him. And in so living we shall know it and Him; we shall know love, and Jesus, and God.

THE LONG, ROUGH ROAD HE TROD

The Book's Story.

It wasn't always a rough road, of course. But as you look at it from end to end, the roughness of it is what takes your eye most, and takes great hold of your heart. The smooth places here and there make you feel that it was a rough road. And yet, rough though it really was, the roughness was eased by the love in the heart of the Man that trod it; though not eased for the soles of His feet, nor for hands and face. For there was thorny roughness at the sides as He pushed through, as well as steep roughness under foot.

And it may not seem so long at first. But the longer you look, the sharper your eyes get to see how great was the distance He had to come, from where He was, down to where we were.

Let me take a little sea room, and go back a bit so we can see the full length, and the real roughness, of the road He came. And lest some of you may think that the telling of the first part of it has the sound of a fairy tale, let me tell you that it is simply the story of what actually took place, as told in the pages of this old Book of God. It will be a help if you will keep your copy of the

Bible at hand, and turn thoughtfully to its pages now and then as we talk.

There is a rare simplicity in the way in which the story of the Bible is told. And it helps to remember that the Bible is never concerned with chronology, nor with scientific process but only with giving pictures of moral or spiritual conditions among men as seen from above. And chiefly it is concerned with giving a picture of God, in His power and patience and gentleness, and in His great justice and right in dealing with everybody. Yet the picture and the language never clash with the facts of nature and of life as dug out by student or scientist.

It is a great help in talking about these things of God, and of human life, not to have any theories to fit and press things into, but simply to take the Book's story, and to tell it over again in the language of our generation. It simplifies things quite a bit not to try to fit God into your philosophy, but to accept His own story of life. It not only greatly simplifies one's outlook, it gives you such sure footing, such steadiness. Any other footing may go out from under your feet any time. But the old Book of God "standeth sure," never more sure than to-day when it was never more riddled at, and mined under. But neither bullets nor mining have affected the Book itself. The only harm has been in the kick-back of the firing, upon those standing close by.

I am frank to confess my own ignorance of the

great truths we are talking over here, save for the Bible itself, and the response to it within my own spirit, and the further response to it in human life all over the earth to-day West and East. Human life is a faithful mirror, accurately reflecting to-day just the conditions found in this old Book. No book so faithfully and accurately describes the workings and feelings of the human mind and heart of to-day in our western world, and in all the world, as this Book, written so long ago in the language of the East. Its finger still gives accurately the pulse beat of the race. And it helps, too, to tell the story in the simple way in which this Book itself does, as a story.

God on a Wooing Errand.

God and man used to live together in a garden. It was a most wonderful garden, full of trees and flowers and fruit, of singing birds with rare feathers and songs, of beasts that had never yet learned fear, nor to make others feel it, and a beautiful river of living water. The name given it indicates that it was a most delightful spot.[1] God and man used to live together in this garden. They talked and walked and worked together. Man helped God in putting the finishing touches on His work of creation. It was the first school, with God Himself as teacher.[2] God and man used to have a trysting time under the trees in the twilight. But one evening when God came

[1] Eden: delight. [2] Genesis ii. 8-20.

for the usual bit of fellowship the man was not there. God was there.[1] He had not gone away, and He has never gone away. Man had gone away, and God was left lonely standing under the tree of life.

A friend, in whose home we were, told of her little daughter's remark one day. The mother had been teaching her that there is only one God. The child seemed surprised and on being told again, said in her childlike simplicity, "I think He must be very lonesome." Well, the child was right in the word used. God is lonesome, though for an utterly different reason than was in the child's mind. God was lonesome that day, left standing alone under the trees of the garden. He is lonesome for fellowship with every one who stays away from Himself. That homely human word may well express to us the longing of His heart.

Man went away from God that day, then he wandered farther away, then he lost his way back, then he didn't want to come back. And away from God his ideas about God got badly confused. His eyes grew blind to God's pleading face, his ears dull and then deaf to God's voice. His will got badly warped and bent out of shape morally, and his life sadly hurt by the sin he had let in.[2]

And all this was very hard on God.[3] It *grieved*

[1] Genesis iii. 8, 9. [2] Genesis iv.-vi.
[3] Genesis vi. 6; Deuteronomy v. 29; Psalm lxxxi. 13; Isaiah xlviii. 18.

Him at His heart. He sent many messengers, one after another, through long years, but they were treated as badly as they could be.[1] And at last God said to Himself, "What more can I do? This is what I will do. I'll go down Myself and live among them, and woo them back Myself." And so it was done. One day He wrapped about Himself the garb of our humanity, and came in amongst us as one of ourselves.[2] And He became known amongst us as Jesus. He had spoken the world into being; now, in John's simple homely language, He pitched His tent amongst our tents as our near neighbour and kinsman.[3] Our Lord Jesus was the face of God looking into ours, the voice of God speaking into the ears of our hearts, the hand of God reached down to make a way back and then lead us along the way back again, the heart of God coming in touch to warm ours and make us willing to go back.

It was a long road He came, as long as the distance we had gone away from Him. And no measuring stick has yet been whittled out that can tell that distance. We want to look a bit at the last lap of the road, the earth-lap. It runs from the Bethlehem plain where He came in, to the

[1] Mark xii. 1-8; II Chronicles xxxvi. 15,16.—These passages, and many similar, while speaking directly of the one nation Israel, are giving a picture of the heart of God toward all men, and His habit of action. Israel itself was the messenger-nation, whose life was meant to be God's message of love to all the race.

[2] John i. 1-18, especially verses 1-5, 14.

[3] John i. 14 f. c.

Olivet hilltop where He slipped away again up and back, for a time, until things are ready for the next step in His plan.

The Rough Places.

The bit of earth-road began to get pretty rough before He had quite gotten here. The pure gentle virgin-mother was under cruelly hurting suspicion on the point about which a woman is properly most sensitive, and that too by the one who was nearest to her. I've wondered why Joseph, too, was not told of the plan of God when Mary was, and so she be spared this sore suspicion. I think it was because he simply *could* not have taken it in beforehand, though he rose so nobly when he was told. Her experience was unavoidable, humanly speaking.

That hastily improvised cradle was in rather a rough spot for both mother and babe. The hasty fleeing for several days and nights to Egypt, with those heart-rending cries of the grief-stricken mothers of Bethlehem haunting their ears, the cautious return, and then apparently the change of plans from a home in historic Bethlehem to the much less favoured village of Nazareth,—it was all a pretty rough beginning on a very rough road. It was a sort of prophetic beginning. There proved to be blood-shedding at both ends, and each time innocent blood, too.

The word Nazareth has become a high fence hiding from view thirty of the thirty-three years.

Was this the dead-level, monotonous stretch of the road, from the time of the early teens on to the full maturity of thirty? Yet it proved later to have a dangerously rough place on the precipice side of the town. It seems rather clear that Joseph and Mary would have much preferred some other place, their own family town, cultured Bethlehem, for rearing this child committed to their care. But the serious danger involved decided the choice of the less desirable town for their home.[1]

But the roughest part began when our Lord Jesus turned His feet from the shaded seclusion of Nazareth, and turned into the open road. At once came the Wilderness, the place of terrific temptation, and of intense spirit conflict. The fact of temptation was intensified by the length of it. Forty long days the lone struggle lasted. The time test is the hardest test. The greatest strength is the strength that wears, doesn't wear out. That Wilderness had stood for sin's worst scar on the earth's surface. Since then it has stood for the most terrific and lengthened-out siege-attack by the Evil One upon a human being. Satan himself came and rallied all the power of cunning and persistence at his command. He did his damnable worst and best.

In an art gallery at Moscow is a painting by a Russian artist of "Christ in the Wilderness," which reverently and with simple dramatic power brings to you the intense humanity of our Lord,

[1] Matthew ii. 22, 23.

and how tremendously real to Him the temptation was. This helps to intensify to us the meaning of the Wilderness. It stands for victory, by a man, in the power of the Spirit, over the worst temptation that can come.

Then follows a long stretch of rough road with certain places sharply marked out to our eyes. The rejection by the Jewish leaders began at once. It ran through three stages, the silent contemptuous rejection, the active aggressive rejection, then the hardened, murderous rejection running up to the terrible climax of the cross.

The contemptuous rejection of the Baptist's claim for his Master, by the official commission sent down to inquire,[1] was followed by the more aggressive, as they began to realize the power of this man they had to deal with. John's imprisonment revealed an intensifying danger, and the need of withdrawing to some less dangerous place.

Our Lord's change to Galilee, and to preaching and working among the masses, was followed by a persistent campaign on the part of the Southerners of nagging, harrying warfare against Him throughout Galilee. It grew in bitterness and intensity, with John's death as a further turning point to yet intenser bitterness. The visits to Jerusalem were accompanied by fiercer attacks, venomous discussions, and frenzied attempts at personal violence. This grew into the third stage of rejection, the cool, hardened plotting of His

[1] John i. 19-28.

death. The last weeks things head up at a tremendous rate; our Lord appears to be the one calm, steady man, even in His terrific denunciation of them, held even and steady in the grip of a clear, strong purpose, as He pushed His way unwaveringly onward. Then came the terrible climax,—the cross. The worst venomous spittle of the serpent's poison sac spat out there. It was the climax of hate, and the climax of His unspeakable love.

When Your Heart's Tuned to the Music.

Surely it was a long, rough road. Its length was not measured by miles, nor years, but by the experiences of this Lone Man. So measured it becomes the longest road ever trod, from purity's heights to sin's depths; from love's mountain top to hate's deepest gulf. It makes a new record for roughness. For no one has ever suffered what our Lord Jesus did; and no one's suffering ever had the value and meaning for another that His had and has for all men and for us. Not one of us to-day realizes how He suffered, nor the intensity of meaning that suffering actually has for all the race, and for those of us who accept it for ourselves.

It was a rough, long road, and He knew ahead that it would be. He saw dimly ahead, then more sharply outlined as He drew on, those crossed logs in the road, growing bigger and darker and more forbidding as He pushed on.

But He could not be stopped by that, for He was thinking about us, and about His Father. He pushed steadily on, past crossed logs all overgrown and tangled with thorn bushes and poison ivy vines, bearing the marks of logs and thorns and poison ivy, but He went through to the end of the road, He reached His world; He reached *our hearts.* And now He is longing to reach through our hearts to the hearts of the others.

"But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through,
'Ere He found His sheep that were lost.

'Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way
That mark out the mountain's track?'
'They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back.'

But all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gate of heaven,
'Rejoice! I have found my sheep.'"[1]

But there was something more on that road. Do you know how the wind blows through the trees on the steep mountain side, and will make music in your heart, *if your heart is tuned to its music,* even while you are pushing your way through thorny tanglewood and undergrowth? Do you know how, as you go down the deep mountain ravines, with the wild rushing torrent

[1]E. C. Clephane.

far below, where a single misstep would mean so much, how the breeze playing through the leaves makes sweetest melody, *if your heart's tuned to it?*

Well, this great Lone Man had a heart tuned for the music of this road. The strong wind of His Father's love blew down through the wild mountains into His face, and made sweetest music, and His ear was in tune and heard it. He had a tuning-fork that gave Him the true pitch for the rarest music, while His feet travelled cautiously the deep wilderness ravines, and boldly climbed through the thorny undergrowth of that steep hill just outside the city wall. Obedience is the rhythm of two wills, that blends their action into rarest harmony. Some of us need to use His tuning-fork,[1] so as to enjoy the music of the road.

[1] Psalm xl. 8 f.c.; John iv. 34; Hebrews xii. 2.

THE PLEADING CALL TO FOLLOW

Hungry for the Human Touch.

God hungers for the human touch. There's an inner hesitancy in saying this, and in hearing it. We feel it can hardly be so, even though our inner hearts would wish it were so.

We know that we men hunger for the human touch, the strongest of us. And in our hour of sore need we know that our inner hearts look up, and wish we could have a really close touch with God. Well, this is a bit of the image of God in us. We were made so, like Himself. In seeing ourselves here, we are getting a closer look at the heart of God. He longs for the human touch. When He made us He breathed into our nostrils the breath of His own life. And this is not simply a bit of the first Genesis chapter. It is a bit of every human life. There's the breath of God in every new life born into the world. He gives a bit of Himself. We are not complete creatively until part of Himself has come to be part of us.

And Jesus' coming was but the same thing put in yet more intense, close, appealing shape to us. He came to get us in touch again after the break

of sin. He gave His blood that we might have life again after the sin-break had broken off our life, and commenced to dry it up. This was an even closer touch. The breath of God came in Eden to breathe in our lungs. The blood of His Son came on Calvary to give life-action to our hearts. Could there be anything to make clearer His hunger for the human touch?

The Holy Spirit's presence spells out the same thing once more. There has been every sort of thing to induce Him to go away. He has been ignored, left out of all reckoning, and talked against. Yet with a patience beyond what that word means to us, He has remained creatively in every man as the very breath of his life. And He comes and remains the very breath of the spirit life in those who yield to His pleading call.

Jesus was God coming after us. We had gone away. He came to woo us back into close touch again. He came to the nation of Israel, that through it He might reach out to all men. When He comes again it will be again to use Israel as His messenger, while He Himself will be present on the earth in a new way to woo men to Himself. When that nation's leaders rejected John's announcement, and so rejected our Lord Jesus, He began to appeal to individual men, while waiting for the nation. And the work with individuals was also His call to the nation.

So the chief thing He did was to call men. His presence was a call, and the crowds flocked

to Him wherever He went. His life of purity and sympathy was felt as an earnest call and responded to eagerly. His doings were a very intense call. Every healed man and woman, every one set free of demon influence, every one of the fed multitudes, felt called to this man who had helped him so. His teaching was a continual call, and His preaching. But above all else stood out the personal call He gave men. For our Lord Jesus was not content to deal with the crowds simply; He dealt with men one by one in intimate heart touch.

Called to Go.

There are a number of invitations He used in calling men. It was as though in His eagerness He used every sort that might go home. And yet there was more than this; these invitations are like successive steps up into the life He wanted them to have. He said, "Come unto Me."[1] This was always the first, and still remains first. It led, and it leads, into rest of heart and life, peace with God. He quickly followed it with "Come ye after Me."[2] They must come to Him before they could come after Him. This was found to mean discipleship, learning the road. He would "make" them like Himself in going after others.

He said, "take My yoke upon you."[3] This

[1] Matthew xi. 28.
[2] Matthew iv. 19, with Luke v. 1-11.
[3] Matthew xi. 29, 30.

meant a bending down to get into the yoke, a surrender of will and heart to Himself, and then partnership, fellowship side-by-side with Himself.

Then He spoke another word to the innermost circle, on the night in which He was betrayed. He had a long talk that evening with the eleven around the supper table, and walking down to the grove of olives at the Brook of the Cedars.[1] Several times that evening He used this new word, "abide," "abide in Me." That means staying with Him, not leaving, living continuously with Him. It means a continued separation from anything that would separate from Him. And then it means a fulness of life coming from Himself into us as we draw all our life from Himself, a rich ripeness, a rounded maturity, a depth of life, and these always becoming more,—richer, rounder, deeper.

Then after the awful days of the cross were past, on the evening of the resurrection day, in the upper room with ten of the inner disciples, He practically said, "You be Myself"; "as the Father sent Me, even so send I you"[2]; "You be I." I wonder if any one of us has ever been taken or mistaken for the Lord Jesus. We would never know it, of course. But He meant it to be so.

A Scottish lady missionary in India tells of a Bible class of girls which she had. She was teaching them about the life and character of the

[1] John xiii. 31-xvi. 33. [2] John xx. 21.

Lord Jesus. One day a new girl came in, fresh from the heathenism in which she grew up, knowing nothing of the Gospel. She listened, and then became quite intense and excited in her childish way, as she heard them talking about some One, how good He was, how gentle, how He was always teaching and helping the people around Him. At last she could restrain her eagerness no longer, but blurted out, "I know that man; he lives near us." It was found that she did not know about Christ, but supposed they were speaking of a very earnest native Christian man living in her neighbourhood. She had mistaken her neighbour for Jesus. How glad that man must have been if he ever knew. This was a part of our Lord's plan.

And at the very end, these successive invitations took the shape of a command, which was both a permission and an order,—"Go ye."[1] Men who had taken to heart, one after another, these invitations were ready for the command. They would be eager for it. The invitations were the Master's preparation for the command. He could trust such men to go, and to keep steady and true as they went, in the power He gave them.

There is one word that you find in all these invitations—"Me." They all centre about the Lord Jesus. He is the centre of gravity drawing every one, in ever growing nearness and meaning, to Himself. It is only when we have been drawn

[1] Matthew xxviii. 18-20.

into closest touch with Him that we are qualified to "go" to others. It's only Himself in us, only as much of Himself as is in us, that will be helpful to any one else, or will make any one else willing to break with his old way. He is the only magnet to draw men away from the old life up to Himself.

"Follow Me."

But there's one other invitation which belongs in this list. It proves to be the greatest of them all, because you come to find it includes all these others. It's His "Follow Me." It seems at first glance to be the same as that "Come after Me." But it is the word He repeated again and again, under different circumstances, with added explanations, to the same men, until you feel that He meant it to stand out as the great invitation to His disciples. It seems to mean different things at different times. That is to say, it grew in its significance. It came to mean more than it had seemed to.

Peter is a good illustration here. The word really came to him five times, with a different, an added, meaning each time. His first following meant acquaintance.[1] John the Herald had sent his disciples, John and Andrew, along after Jesus as He was walking one day on the Jordan river road. They followed Jesus to their first acquaintance in a two hours' talk, which quite satis-

[1] John i. 35-42.

fied their hearts as to who He was. John never forgot that first following. Every detail of it stands out in his memory when long years after he began to write his story of the Master. Andrew went at once to hunt up Peter, and brought him face-to-face with his newly found Friend and Master. That interview settled things for Peter. Andrew's following now included his. Following meant the beginning of the personal friendship which was to mean so much for both of them.

It was about a year after, that "Follow Me" had a new meaning to Peter and some others.[1] The invitation was an illustrated one this time, illustrated by a living picture of just what it meant. It was one morning by the Lake of Galilee. Peter and his partners had had a poor night's fishing, and were out on shore washing their nets. The Master had come along, with a great crowd pressing in to get closer and hear better. There was danger of the crowd pushing the Master into the water. The Master borrowed Peter's boat for a pulpit. Peter sat facing the crowd while the Master talked to them.

Was that the first time the spell of a crowd began to get its subtle heart-hold on Peter as he looked into their hungry eyes? Who can withstand the great appeal of the crowd's eyes? Not our Lord, nor any that have caught His spirit. Then the great draught of fishes, after the fishless night, made Peter feel the Master's

[1] Matthew iv. 18-22, with Luke v. 1-11.

power. Fishes would make him feel it, being a fisherman, as nothing else would. The sense of Jesus' power, and with it a sense of purity—interesting how the power made him feel the purity—this brought him to his knees at our Lord's feet with the confession of his own sinfulness.

Peter was greatly moved that morning, greatly shaken. A new experience of tremendous power had come to him. And out of it came a new life, a radical change as he left the old occupation, fishing, boats, father, means of livelihood, and entered upon the new life. "Follow Me" meant a radical change of life, constant companionship with Jesus, sharing His life, going to school, getting ready for leadership and service; yes, and for suffering too. He entered the Master's itinerant training school that morning. A man needs a sight of the Lord Jesus' power, a *feel* of it, before he is fit to serve, or even to go to school to get ready for service.

It was some months after this that another meaning grew into the words "Follow Me," and grew out of them. The words are not spoken this time, but acted. Out of the group of disciples that He had gathered about Him our Lord prayerfully chose out Peter with the others to be sent out as His messenger to others.[1] Part of the schooling was over; now a new part, a new term of school, was to begin. He gave them a special talk that morning, and sent them out to

[1]Matthew x. 1-5; Mark iii. 14-19; Luke vi. 12-17.

teach and heal and do for the crowds what He had been doing.

He called them Apostles, Sent-ones, Missionaries. "Follow Me" now meant going to others. It meant more—*power,* power to do for men all the Master Himself had done. First, power felt that early morning by the lake, now power given. That was a great advance in training. Power had to be felt before it could be given, and has to be felt before it can be used. Only as the power takes hold of our inner hearts to the feeling point, will it ever take hold of others. And no life is changed through our service till power takes hold of us to *the feeling point.*

The Deeper Meaning.

But there was a special session of the "Follow Me" school one day, a very serious session.[1] They had to be shown the red threads in the weave of the word. The words had to be held under the knife, so they could look into the cut, and see the deeper meaning. "Follow Me" had to take deeper hold of them yet, if His power was to get the deeper hold of them, and, by and by, get hold of the needy crowds. The very setting of the words gives the new meaning to them. John had felt the keen edge of Herod's axe blade, and was now in the upper presence. They were up in the far northern part because

[1]Matthew xvi. 13-28.

of the growing danger threatening Him by the leaders.

It is the turning point where our Lord Jesus begins to tell them that He was to suffer. Their ears *could* not take in the words. Their dazed eyes show that they think they could not have heard aright,—He to *suffer!* What could this mean? They hadn't figured on this when they left the nets and boats to follow. There had been a rosy glamour filling impulsive Peter's self-confident sky. Now this black storm cloud! Then to Peter's foolhardy daring came words spoken with a new intense quietness that made the words quiver: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and 'Follow Me.'"[1]

This was startling to a terrific degree. Here was a new, strange, perplexing combination—"deny himself," and "cross," coupled with His "Follow Me." What could He mean? This was surely some of His intensely figurative language again, they think. Yes, it surely was; and it stood for a yet intenser experience. "Follow Me" means sacrifice. It means a going down as well as a going up. And it proves to mean that one can go up in power and service, only as far as he has gone down in the obedience that includes sacrifice. Did Peter take in the meaning that day? I think not. Actions speak louder than words.

That betrayal night a few short months after,

[1] Matthew xvi. 24; Mark viii. 34; Luke ix. 23.

when the actual cross was almost in actual sight, he "followed Him afar off."[1] Without knowing it, that was as far as he had ever really followed thus far. He wanted to keep as "far off" from that cross as possible. He always had. He baulked at its first mention, baulked tremendously. Yet he "followed." Poor Peter! he was in a terrible strait betwixt two, this wondrous Master whom he really loved, and this threatening cross of nails and thongs and thorns. It was a stiff struggle between heart and flesh; between the longing of his love and the shrinking from pain and hardship and shame.

And Peter's kinsfolk are still having the same struggle. A great many stop here. This is going *too* far! They prefer staying by the easier "Follow Me's," and forgetting this one. Yes, and go on living powerless lives, and engaging in powerless service, when the crowds were never so needy.

Peter didn't follow this time. The road was too rough. He stumbled and fell badly. Badly? Still no worse than many others. When he got up he was still facing the same way. You can always tell a man's mettle by the way he faces as he gets up after a bad fall.

Six months or so after there came another "Follow Me," to Peter. No, it wasn't another; it was the same one, the one he hadn't accepted. Peter was to have another opportunity at the

[1] Matthew xxvi. 58.

same place where he fell so badly. How patient our Lord Jesus was—and is.

It was one morning just after breakfast—a rare breakfast—on the edge of the lake, after as poor a night's fishing as that other time.[1] Again the touch of power revealed the Master's presence. Again Peter had a special word with the Master while the others are hauling in the fish. Now breakfast's over and the seven are grouped about the One, listening. The Lord's quiet skilled hand touches the heart meaning of "Follow Me." Its real meaning is a love meaning. Do you love? Then "Follow Me." Then you *must* follow, your love draws you after, even though the path be rough and broken.

This is the same "Follow Me" that Peter baulked at so badly months before. Its meaning had not changed. It would mean a death, Peter is plainly told. But now Peter baulks no longer. The Master's great love had taught Him how really to love. And now not even a cross for himself would or could keep him from following close up to such a Master.

Here is the meaning of "Follow Me" as it worked out in Peter's experience—acquaintance, a new life, schooling, service, a sight of sacrifice, and a baulking, then—a sight of Jesus on the cross, and then a willingness to go on even though it meant the sorest sacrifice. This is an etching of the road Peter actually went, an etching in black and white, with the black very

[1] John xxi. 15-19.

black. Is it a picture of your road? But perhaps you have never filled out the last part—still back at that baulking place. In the thick of our present life, in the noise and din of the street of modern life, comes as of old the quiet, clear, insistent call "Follow Me."

Getting in Behind.

But, some one says, how can we really follow this Lone Man, our Lord Jesus Christ? He was so pure in His life, stainless in motive, and unstained in character. And we—well, the nearer we get to Him the more instinctively we find Peter's lakeshore cry starting up within, "I am a sinful man." His very presence makes us feel the sin, the sin-instinct, the old selfish something within. How can we really follow? And the answer that comes is a real answer. It answers the inner heart-cry.

It is this: we begin where He ended. The cross was the end of His life. It must be the beginning of ours. It was the climax of His obedience. All the lines of His life come together at the cross. It is the beginning for us. All the lines of our lives, the lines of purity, of character, of service, of power, run back to the one starting point. And we come to find—some of us pretty slowly—that it is only the lines that do start there that lead to anything worth while. The starting point for the true life, and for real service is very clear. And if any of us have

made a false start, it will be a tremendous saving to drop things and go back and get the true start. "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth from all sin"—this is the only point from which to start the "Follow Me" life. "Follow Me" does not mean imitation. It means reincarnation. It's some One coming to re-live His life in us. He died that His life might be loosed out to be relived in us.

I have already spoken of this as being a call to friendship. All the rest that comes is meant to be what naturally grows out of this friendship. Peter never forgot his last "Follow Me" call. "Lovest thou Me?" Then thou mayest follow. This greatly sweetens all the rest. It's all for Him!—our friend. Out of this personal relation comes service, power in service, suffering because of opposition to Him whom we serve, and joy because we may suffer on His account.[1]

Matthew became His friend that day down at the little customs-shed at the Capernaum water edge. And out of that friendship grew our first gospel. John lived very close, and out of his intimacy came the gospel that reveals to us most the inner heart of our Lord, and His own intimacy of relation with the Father. And out of that friendship came, too, not only John's wonderful little "abiding" epistle,[2] but the Revelation book, which gives us an inkling of the coming in of the Kingdom time that lies so near to our Lord's heart. Out of such intimacy of

[1] Acts v. 41. [2] I John.

touch grew Stephen's ringing address before the Jewish council, and—his stormy, stony exit, out and up into his Master's presence.

And time would fail me to tell of those in every corner of the earth, and every generation since our Lord was here, who have served and suffered because they loved Him and followed. Hidden away in the rocks and caves of France from the fires of persecution, the Huguenots sang their favourite hymn:

"I have a friend so precious,
So very dear to me,
He loves me with such tender love,
He loves so faithfully.

I could not live apart from Him,
I love to feel Him nigh,
And so we dwell together,
My Lord and I."

When I was in China a year ago, my heart caught some of the distant echoes of that sort of singing, by Chinese Christians, in the midst of the fiery persecutions of the Boxer time. And I heard the same sad, glad undertone last year out in Corea, in the homes we visited, whose loved ones were behind prison bars for their Friend's sake.

One of the latest chapters of this friendship's outcome is only just closed in the story of that quiet, young friend of the Lord Jesus, William Whiting Borden, who sat down a little while ago, and so placed the wealth left him that the world might learn of his Friend, and then went out and

laid down his life in Egypt in this same passion of friendship. So the earth's sod in every corner has known the fertilizing of such friendship blood, and shall some day know a wondrous harvest under our great Friend's own gleaning.

And this is why He asks us to follow. He needs our help. Our Lord Jesus gave His precious life blood to redeem the world, to set it free from its sin-slavery. But there are two parts to that redemption, His and ours. These two parts are strikingly brought out by a single word in the beginning of the book of Acts,[1] the word "began." Luke says that what he has been writing in his Gospel of the life and death of Jesus was only a *beginning*. This was what "He *began* both to do and to teach." It is usually explained that what our Lord Jesus began in the Gospels, the Holy Spirit continued to *do* in the Acts, and to *teach* in the Epistles. And this is no doubt true. But there is still more here.

The Holy Spirit continued and continues through men what He began through Jesus. There is a second part to the work of redemption, our part, the Holy Spirit working through us. There had to be a first part; that was the great part. There could be no second without a first. That first part was done when our Lord Jesus was hurt to death for us. That is the great first part. Yet in doing that He had but begun something. He touched Palestine. We are to cover the earth. He touched one na-

[1] Acts i. 1.

tion; we are to go to all nations. We are to continue what He began. The work of redemption was finished on the cross so far as He was concerned; but not yet finished so far as its being taken to "all the world" was concerned. He needs us. This is why He asks us to follow. He needs our co-operation.

The second great factor in carrying out what He began is—how shall I put it? Shall I say, men and the Holy Spirit? You say, "No, change that, say the Holy Spirit and men. Put the Spirit first." Well, the order of these two depends on where you are standing. If you are standing at the Father's right hand, you say "the Holy Spirit and men." For the power is all in the Holy Spirit. He is the power. There can be nothing done without Him. Whatever is done in which He is not dominant amounts to nothing. How I wish we men might have that tremendous fact grip us in these days when the whole emphasis is on organization.

But, very reverently let me say this, and I say it thus plainly that we may know how much our Lord Jesus is depending on us, how really He needs us,—this, that since we are on the earth, in the place of human action, where the fighting is to be done, it is accurate to say with utmost reverence, "*men* and the Holy Spirit." For mark keenly, the initiative is in human hands. God's action has always waited on human action. The power is only in the Holy Spirit. The most astute and strong leadership amounts to nothing

without Him flooding it with His presence. But the power needs a channel. The Spirit needs men strongly pliant to His will. The great world-plan waits, and always has waited, for willing men. And so our great Friend asks us to follow because He really needs us in His plan.

Have you ever noticed the picture in the word "follow"? You remember that the earliest language was picture language. And it is a great help sometimes to dig down under a word and get the picture. Here, it is a man standing on a roadway, earnestly beckoning, and pointing to the road he is in. The Old Testament word means literally "same road." The very word the Master Himself used means "in behind."

To-night this wondrous Lord Jesus stands just ahead. His face still shows where the thorns cut and the thongs tore. But there is a marvellous tenderness and pleading in those great patient eyes. His hand is reached out beckoning, and you cannot miss the hole in the palm of it. The hand points to the road He trod for us. And His voice calls pleadingly, "Take this same road; get in behind. I need your help with My world."

Selling All.

And yet—and yet——. Do you remember one time our Lord turned to the crowds that were following and told them it would be better to count

up the cost before deciding to be His disciples?[1] He feared if they didn't there would be "mocking" by outsiders because His followers' lives didn't square with their profession. His fear seems to have been well founded. There seems to be quite a bit of that sort of mocking. It's better to count the cost, to know what following really means.

A Salvation Army officer in Calcutta tells about a young handsome Hindu of an aristocratic family. One day he came in, drew out a New Testament, and asked the meaning of the words, "sell whatsoever thou hast," in the story of the rich young ruler.[2] The Salvationist told him it meant that if a man's possessions stood in the way of his becoming a Christian he must be willing, if need be, to dispose of them for the needy. To his surprise the young man quietly said, "I fear you don't understand."

"Do you want to be a Christian?"

"Yes, but I'm not willing to sell all that I possess."

After a little more talk the young Indian left. Sometime after he appeared at one of the Salvation Army meetings, and when the opportunity was given for those who would accept Christ to kneel at the altar, at once he started forward. But instantly a storm broke out in the crowded meeting. A group of men rushed forward, shouting angrily, seized the young man and bore him bodily out while the crowd watched in ter-

[1]Luke xiv. 25-35. [2]Mark x. 17-22.

ror. A few weeks later the young man turned up again, asking to be taken in and quietly saying, "I have begun to sell all."

Then his story came out. A Bible had come into his hands; the character and call of the Lord Jesus made a great appeal to him. He was haunted by the words, "sell whatsoever thou hast." He felt he knew what it meant for him. His family heard of his interest in Christianity. They belonged to the highest class, were wealthy and officially connected with the heathen temple-worship. They did their best to dissuade him, then finding that useless, they kept watch, and had him forcibly taken from the meeting where he was about to openly confess Christ. The entreaties of his father and mother shook him greatly but failed to change his decision. He had been imprisoned, chained hand and foot, and scantily fed, but all to no purpose. Then he managed to escape and came to the one Christian place he knew, the Salvation Army, and asked to be taken in.

After about two weeks he disappeared as abruptly as he came. Then one day he came back, and told his Salvation friend that he had been carried to Benares, their holy city, and forced to bathe in the Ganges. "But," he said, "as I stood in the water of the Ganges, I said, 'Lord Jesus, wash me in Thy precious blood,' and when I was forced to bow to idols, I bowed my soul to the eternal Father and said, 'Thou art God alone.'" His mother had implored him on

her knees not to disgrace them; his tutor, whom he loved dearly, and his brothers had joined the father in their plea not to bring such shame on the family. "Well," the Salvationist said, "now, you know the meaning of 'sell whatsoever thou hast.'" "Not yet," he said, "but I have sold nearly all."

Again he came back and said quietly, *"I have sold all."* He appeared deeply grief-stricken, and yet there was a light shining in his eye. In answer to questions he said, "I have not only ceased to be a Brahmin, I have ceased to be a human being. I am not only an outcast, I am dead. I have neither father, mother, brothers, nor sisters. I have been burned in effigy, and the ashes buried. It was not the effigy they burned; it was I. My father would not recognize me now if he met me on the street, nor would my mother. I am dead. I have been buried. It is the end. I have sold all."[1]

He had counted the cost. Then though it meant so much, he followed. The rich young Jew to whom the words were first spoken, saw *things* bigger than Jesus; the rich young Hindu saw Jesus bigger. Each held to what he prized most, and let the other go. Would it not be better if we were to count the cost, and then *deliberately* decide? and if it be to follow, then follow *all the way?* I want to talk a little later about what it means to follow. I hope this will

[1] In "Other Sheep," by Harold Begbie.

help us a little in our calculations, in counting the cost before starting in to follow fully.

And yet, and yet, may the vision of the Lone Man in the road, beckoning, flood our eyes while we count the cost, even as with the young Hindu.

WHAT FOLLOWING MEANS

1. *A Look Ahead.*
2. *The Main Road.*
3. *The Valleys.*
4. *The Hilltops.*

1. A LOOK AHEAD

Saltless Salt.

The Lord Jesus never tried to make things look easier than they are. He wanted you to see the road just as it is, and asked you to look at it carefully. He knew this was the only right way to do. He knew that so the sinews would be grown in character that would stand the tests coming, and only so.

It was never His plan to increase the numbers by cutting down the doorsills so men could get in more easily. That was a later arrangement. He was never concerned for numbers, but for right and truth. A man walking alone down the middle of the one true path was more to Him, immensely more, than a great crowd wabbling along on the edge, half out, half in, neither in nor out, and so really out but not knowing it. If they were really out and knew it, it would be better, for they could see more distinctly the path they were not in, its straightness and attractiveness.

This sort of thing grew more marked with our Lord Jesus as the end drew on, the tragic end. The crowds thickened about Him those last months. They liked good bread, and plenty of

it, and healed bodies, pain gone. And He liked to give them these. He helped just as far as they would let Him. But He wanted to give them more. He knew this other was only temporary. He was more concerned about healing the spirit of its disease, and giving the more abundant life. And full well He knew that only the knife could help many. And the knife had to be freshly sharpened, and used with strong decisive hand, if healing and life were to come.

And men haven't changed, nor the diseases that hurt their life, nor the Master, nor the tender love of His heart. But there's more than knife; there's fulness of life following. He would have us get the life even though it means the knife. Most times—every time, shall I say? —the life comes only through the knife. Yet when the life has come, with its great tireless strength, and its deep breathing, and sheer delight of living, you are grateful for the knife that led the way to such life.

One day our Lord entered a vigorous protest against the wrong sort of salt,[1] saltless salt, the sort that seemed to be salt, and you used it and depended on it, and then found how unsalty it was, for the thing you depended on it to preserve, had gone bad. The great need is for salty salt. There still seems to be a great lot of this saltless salt in use. It's labelled salt, and so it's used as salt, but it befools you. The saltiness has been lost out, and the man using it wakes up

[1]Luke xiv. 25-35, with Matthew v. 13.

to find out how great is the loss, loss of what he thought he had salted, and loss of time, character and time, the character of that salted with saltless salt, and the time spent.

It would be an immense clearing of the religious situation to-day on both sides of the Atlantic, if the saltless salt could be got rid of, either by removing the unsaltiness in it—though that seems a hopeless task, it's so unsalty, and there is so much of it, and such a large proportion of it, and it's so well content with being just as unsalty as it is. *Or,* the only other thing is put very simply and vigorously by the Lord in a short intense sentence, "Cast it out." Out with it. And lots of it *is out* so far as preservative usefulness is concerned.

And yet with wondrous patience He puts up with a great deal of salt that seems to have nearly reached the utterly saltless stage, hoping to get rid of the unsaltiness, and then to give it a new saltiness. For, be it keenly marked, when the saltiness has quite gone out of the salt, when the preservative quality has quite gone out from that body of people which He has placed in the world as its moral preservative,—then look out. Aye, "look up,"[1] for that's the only direction from which any help can relieve the desperateness of the situation. And "lift up your heads," for then comes a new preservative to the rotting earth-life. But some of us will smell the smell of the decay before the new salt begins to work.

[1] Luke xxi. 28.

The Thing in Us That Wants Things.

It was along toward that tragic end, when the tension was tightening up to the snapping point, the bitter hatred of the leaders yet more bitter, the crowds yet denser, the terms of discipleship yet more plainly put with loving, faithful plainness, that a characteristic incident happened.[1] A young man of gentle blood and breeding, and influential position, came eagerly, courteously elbowing his way through the crowd that gathered thick about. Our Lord had just risen from where He had been sitting teaching, when this young man, in his eagerness, came running to Him. With deep reverence of spirit he knelt down in the road, and began asking about the true life, the secret of living it. Our Lord begins talking about being true in all his dealings with his fellow-men. The young man earnestly assured Him that he had paid great attention to this, and felt that there was nothing lacking in him on this score.

The utter sincerity and earnestness of his spirit was so clear that the Master's love was drawn out to him. And He showed His love in a way characteristic of Him in dealing with those who want to go to the whole length of the true road. That is, He talked very plainly to him. There were four things to do beforehand, He said, four starting steps into this life he was so eager

[1] Mark x. 17-22.

to enter. Four words tell the four steps: "go," "sell," "give," and "come."

"Go" meant the decisive starting in on this way; "sell" meant putting everything into the Father's hand for His disposal as *He* alone might choose. "Give" meant using everything, everything you are, and have, and can influence, as *He* bids you. "Come" meant this new man, this decisive, emptied, now trusted man, trusted as a trustee, coming into a new personal relation with the Lord Jesus.

The first three things were important because they revealed the man. But *the* thing was that the man, this new-emptied and now God-trusted man, should come into personal touch with the Lord Jesus. The things he had and held on to came in between. When they no longer came in to separate, then, and only then, was he ready to get "in behind" and "follow" along the "same road." For this is the friendship road. Only friends are allowed here, inner friends, those who come in by that gateway. There must be the personal touch. Things that stand in the way of that must be straightened out.

It was rather a startling answer. The young man was startled tremendously. The way to come in is first to go out. The way to get is first to give. The way to buy what you want is to sell what you have. That is to say, the way for this young man to get what he was so eager for was to get rid of what he already had. And yet it wasn't getting rid of the things the

Master was thinking about, but getting rid of the thing in him that wanted the things, getting rid of their hold upon him. Our Lord Jesus wanted, and wants, free men, emptied men. He wants the strength in the man that the emptying and selling process gives. This is the laboratory where the unsaltiness is being burned out, and the new salty saltiness being generated, put in.

This young fellow couldn't stand the test. So many can't. No, I'm getting the words wrong. He wouldn't stand it; so many won't. The slavery of *things* was too much. The thing in him that wanted the things was stronger than the thing that wanted the true life. He was too weak to make that "go" decision. He belonged to the weakly fellowship of the saltless ones. They are not wholly saltless, but that's the chief thing that marks them. It's a long-lived fellowship, continuing to this day, with a large membership in good and regular standing.

I think the real trouble with this fine-grained lovable young man was in his eyes, the way they looked, what they saw. It was a matter of seeing things in true perspective. He didn't get a good look at the Man he asked his question of. He was looking so intently at the *things* that he couldn't get the use of his eyes for a good look at the Man. This is a very common eye-trouble. He was all right outward, toward his fellows, but he wasn't all right upward toward the Father.

And yet even that statement must be changed.

For a man cannot be right with his fellows who is not right with God. When God doesn't have the passion of the heart, our fellows don't have all they should properly have from us; there is a lack. The common law may be kept, the pounds and yards may weigh and measure off fully what is due them from us, but the uncommon law, the love-law is not being kept. The warm spirit that should breathe out through all our dealings is lacking. It's been checked by the check in the upper movement. Only the spirit that flows freely up, ever flows freely out.

That young Indian aristocrat we spoke of elsewhere got a sight of *Jesus.* That settled *things* for him, including even such sacred things as human loves. This young Jewish aristocrat couldn't get his eyes off of the things. So many "thing"-slaves there are, so much "thing"-slavery. If only there were the sight of *His* face! His *face;* torn? yes; scarred? yes again, but oh, the strength and light and love in it!

Do you remember that other young Jewish, university-trained aristocrat? He got a look, one good long look-in-the-face look of *that face,* one day, on the road up to the northern Syrian capital. The light of it flooded his face, and strangely affected him. He said "when I could not *see* for the glory of that light."[1] He couldn't see things for Him. The sight of Him blurred out the things.

[1] Acts xxii. 11, with ix. 1-9.

The great need to-day is for a sight of *Him.* Lord Jesus, if Thou wouldst show us Thy "hands and feet" again, and torn face, even as in the upper room that resurrection evening,[1] for that's what we are needing. And yet, Thou art doing just that, but the things so hold our vision! And the Master's answer is the same as to the young Jew. We need the decisive "go"; the incisive, inclusive "sell"; the privileged "give"; the new-meaninged "come" into His presence. And then we may get "in behind" Him, and follow close up in the "same road," with eyes for naught but Himself.

Outstanding Experiences.

I want to follow the Master's plan, and ask you to take a good look at His "Follow Me" road. You remember that we have had one talk together about the characteristics of our Lord Jesus' life. Now we want to talk a little about *the experiences* of His life. And I do not mean that we are to try to imitate these experiences, or any of them. The meaning goes much deeper than this, and yet it marks out a simpler road for our feet. I mean that as we actually go along with this Master of ours, these experiences will work out in our lives.

As we let Him in as actual Lord, and get our ears trained for His quiet voice, there will come to us some of the same things that come to Him.

[1] Luke xxiv. 40; John xx. 20.

The same Spirit at work within us, and the same sort of a world at work without, will so work against each other as to produce certain other results, now as then. It is not to be an attempt at imitation; it's far more. It is to be *obedience* on our part, a real Presence within on His part, and a bitter antagonism without on the world's part; rhythmic full glad obedience, a sympathetic powerful real Presence, a tense and intensifying subtle, relentless, but continually-being-thwarted opposition. The key-note for us is simple, full obedience.

There were certain great outstanding experiences in our Lord Jesus' life. Let us briefly notice what these were and group them together. There was *the Bethlehem Birth.* That was a thing altogether distinctive in itself. It was a supernatural birth, the Spirit of God working along purely human lines, in a new special way, for a special purpose. It was a rare blending of God and man in the action of life. It was followed by *the Nazareth Life;* that was a commonplace life, lived in a commonplace village, but hallowed by the presence of the Father, and sweetened by the salt of everything being done under that Father's loving eye. The Father's presence accepted as a real thing became the fragrance of that commonplace daily life. And this life covered most of those human years.

Then our Lord turned from the hidden life of Nazareth to the public ministry. At its beginning stands *the Jordan Baptism of Power.* In

the path of simple obedience He had gone to the Jordan, taken a place among the crowds, and accepted John's baptism. And in this act of obedience, there comes the gracious act of His Father's approval, the Holy Spirit came down upon Him in gracious, almighty power. And from this moment He was under the sway of the Spirit of Power. This was the special preparation and fitting for all that was to follow.

At once the Spirit driveth Him into the Wilderness. And for forty days He goes through the great experience of *the Wilderness Temptation.* In intensity and in prolonged action, it was the greatest experience thus far in His life. He suffered, being tempted. It was a concentration of the continuous temptation of the following years of action. But the Wilderness spelled out two words, temptation *and* victory; temptation such as had never yet been brought, and met, and fought; victory beyond what the race had known. Temptation came to have a new spelling for man, v-i-c-t-o-r-y. It came to have a new spelling for the tempter, d-e-f-e-a-t.

After His virtual rejection by the nation as its Messiah,[1] and the imprisonment of him who stood nearest Him as Messiah,—John the Herald, there followed *the Galilean Ministry.* For those brief years He was utterly absorbed in personally meeting and ministering to the crying needs of the crowds. Compassion for needy men became the ruling under-passion. He was

[1] John i. 19-28.

spent out in responding to the needs of men. It was not restricted to Galilee, but that stands out as the chief scene of this tireless unceasing service. The Galilean ministry meant a life spent in meeting personally the needs of men.

In the midst of that, made increasingly difficult by the ever-increasing opposition, there came the experience of *the Transfiguration Mount.* It comes at a decisive turning point, where He is beginning the higher training of the Twelve for the tragic ending, so surprising and wholly unexpected to them. For a brief moment the dazzling light within was allowed to shine through the garments of His humanity. What was within transfigured the outer, the human face and form. And the overwhelming outshining light was evidence to those three men of the divine glory, the more-than-human glory hidden away within this human man.

Then within a week of the end came *the Gethsemane Agony.* That was the lone, sore stress of spirit under the load of the sin of others. In Gethsemane He went through in spirit what on the morrow He went through in actual experience. Gethsemane was the beginning, the anticipation of Calvary, so far as that could be anticipated. Anticipation here was terrific; yet less terrific than the actual experience.

And then came the climax, the overtopping experience of all for Him, as for us, *the Calvary Cross.* There He died of His own free will. He died for us. He died that we might not die.

He took upon Himself what sin brings to us, while the Father's face was hidden. So He freed us from the slavery of sin, made a way for us back to real life, and so touched our hearts by His love that we were willing to go back.

And close upon the heels of that came *the burial in Joseph's tomb.* The burial was the completion of the death. The tomb was the climax of the cross. He was actually dead and buried. The corn of wheat had fallen down into the ground and been covered up. There was nothing lacking to make full and clear that Jesus had died.

Then came the stupendous experience of *the Resurrection Morning.* Our Lord Jesus yielded to death fully and wholly. Then He seized death by the throat and strangled it. He put death to death. Then He quietly yielded to the upward gravity of His sinless life and rose up. He lived the dependent life even so far as yielding to death, and now the Father quietly brought Him back again to life, to a new life.

And after waiting a while on earth among men, long enough to make it quite clear to His disciples that it was really Himself really back again, He quietly yielded further to the upward gravity, and entered upon *the Ascension Life,* up in the Father's presence. That life is one of intercession. He ever liveth to make intercession for us.[1] He is our pleading advocate at the

[1] Romans viii. 34; Hebrews vii. 25.

Father's right hand.[1] Thirty years of the Nazareth life, three and a half years of personal service, nineteen hundred years, almost, of praying. What an acted-out lesson to us on prayer, the big place it had and has with Him, the true proportion of prayer to all else!

These are the experiences of our Lord Jesus that stand out clear above the mountain range of His life. It was all a high mountain range; these are the great peaks jutting sharply up above the range.

At the Loom.

Now these peaks, these outstanding experiences, as you look at them a bit, seem to fall naturally into three groups. There were certain experiences of power and of privilege, the Bethlehem Birth, the Jordan Baptism, the Nazareth Life, and the Galilean Ministry.

There were experiences of suffering and sacrifice, the Wilderness Temptation, the Gethsemane Agony, the Calvary Death, and the Joseph's Tomb of Burial.

And then there were certain experiences of gladness and great glory, the Transfiguration Mount, the Resurrection Morning, the Ascension Life, and, we shall find a fourth here also, a future experience, the Kingdom Reign and Glory.

These outstanding events, while distinct in themselves, are also representative of continual

[1] I John ii. 1; Hebrews ix. 24.

experiences. The Jordan Baptism stands not only for that event, but for the power throughout those forty and two months. The same sort of suffering that came in Gethsemane had run all through His life, but is strongest in Gethsemane. So each of these experiences is really like a peak resting upon the mountain range of constant similar experience. And these three groups of experience continuously intermingled, interlaced and interwoven, made up the pattern of that wondrous life.

Now these same experiences of His are also the great experiences that will characterize the "Follow Me" life, for every one who will follow fully. It will always remain true that these experiences were distinctive of Him. They meant more to Him than they will or can mean to any other. But it is also true that they will come to us in a degree that will mean everything to us.

I want to change the figure of speech here. I think it will help. This invitation, "Follow Me," is the language of a road, the picture of one walking behind another in a road. And that will remain in our minds as the chief picture of this pleading call. But there's another bit of picture talking that will help. That is the picture of a weaver's loom, with the warp threads running lengthwise, the shuttle threads running crosswise, and the cross beam (or batten) driving each shuttle thread into place in the cloth with a sharp blow.

These three groups of experiences are like so

many hanks of threads in the loom, in which the pattern of life is being woven. The experiences of power and privilege are the warp threads running lengthwise of the loom, into which the others are woven. These make up the foundation of the fabric.

The other two groups make up the shuttle threads, running crosswise, being woven into the warp. The experiences of suffering and sacrifice are the dark threads, the gray threads, sometimes quite black, and the red threads, blood red. The experiences of gladness and glory are the bright threads, yellow, golden, sunny threads.

And the daily round of life, the decisions, the actual step after step in living out the decisions, the patient steady pushing on, is the beam that with sharp blow pushes each thread into its place in the fabric being woven.

As we allow the same Spirit that swayed our Lord's life to control us, He will work out in us certain of these same experiences. And the enmity aroused, and working against that Spirit's presence and control, will bring certain other experiences. Our part will be simple obedience, listening, looking, studying quietness so as to insure keener ears and eyes—it's the quiet spirit that hears what He is saying—then obeying, using all the strength of will, and all the grace at our disposal, simply to hold steady and true, and to obey, no matter what threatens to come, or what actually does come. This will be found to be like weaving.

Probably you have often heard of how the weavers work in the famous Gobelin tapestry factories in Paris. They know nothing of the beauty of the pattern being woven. They work on the "wrong" side, the under side of the web. They miss the inspiration of seeing the rare beauty they themselves are making. All the weaver sees is the apparent tangle of many coloured threads and thread ends, while he thrusts in his needles according to the card of instructions. The more faithfully and skilfully he can follow the directions the better a piece of weaving work is done.

We simply obey. We use all the strength we have, and the skill we can acquire, in obeying. We are not to depend on what we can see or feel for inspiration, only on the Master Loomsman; on His word, written, and spoken in our hearts, and on His answering peace within. Obedience is the one key-note for all the music. Surrender is the first act of full obedience. Obedience is the habitual surrender. Our part is to hear right and do what He bids.

Some day we shall be fairly swept off our feet by the beauty of the pattern He has been weaving—*if* we've let Him have His way at the loom.

2. THE MAIN ROAD—EXPERIENCES OF POWER AND PRIVILEGE

The Bethlehem Birth.

There were four of these experiences in our Lord's life. At the very beginning came *the Bethlehem Birth.* That meant for Him a birth out of the usual course of nature, yet working within nature's usual processes. It was something more-than-the-natural coming down into the natural. The power of the Holy Spirit came upon the pure gentle maiden of Nazareth and a new human life was begotten by Him within her, and in due course came to the maturity of birth. This was a distinctive thing with Jesus.

Now, in quite a different sense, but in a very real sense, there will be for us, too, a Bethlehem Birth. The Holy Spirit will come in and begin a new life within us. This is the only beginning of the "Follow Me" life for any of us. There's a something on the Spirit's part before there can be a beginning on my part. Yet that hardly tells the whole story. My part is really first; I open the door for Him to come in. When I accept Jesus as my Saviour, that's opening the

door. The Spirit comes in and begins the new life within me. And yet there's another first before that first act of mine. He woos me with His patient, tender love. That is the first first. Then I open the door: at once He comes in, and does the thing which only He can do. So begins the "Follow Me" life. This is the real, the only beginning.

And yet there's more here of the practical sort than we have thought of, most of us. It means that there is within us a life higher than the natural life, and this higher life is to *be* higher, it is to be the *controlling* life. It is to hold the upper hand over the natural life. The control is to be from above. That is to say, the motives and desires of the upper life are to be dominant in my daily round. It is the Father-pleasing life as contrasted with the natural life, of which we talked a while ago. Wherever the two come in conflict, the upper is to rule.

Now, I know this rather runs across the grain of a good deal of our so-called Christian life. There are a good many people who, let us really believe, have been "born again," to use the familiar phrase, yet they seem to have stayed in the being-born stage, the infancy stage. That which was "born again" in them seems not to have been developed. It has never been allowed to grow. The under life has been given the upper hand, and the upper life kept strictly down. The salt isn't salty. The common round of life is seasoned wholly by the old seasoning.

Our Lord's "Follow Me" becomes a radical, decisive thing at the very start. It means that we will allow this new life of the Spirit to grow into lusty vigour, and to become the controlling life. So it will be the chief thing. All the life shall be directed and controlled *from above.* This is a result that will come of itself if we really follow. Obedience, and back of that the quiet time on the knees with the Book, will give food and air and growing space to this new life, and its growth will crowd down the other.

The Jordan Baptism of Power.

Then there was a *Jordan Baptism of Power* in our Lord's life. This stood at the beginning of His leadership, His life-work, His service among men. As He came up out of the Jordan waters He stood waiting in prayer. He was expecting something. His whole being was absorbed in the expectancy of what had been promised.[1] And that expectancy was not disappointed. None that wait on God shall be put to confusion by any disappointment.[2] The blue above was rift through, the Holy Spirit as a gentle dove came, and remained upon Him, and the Father's voice of pleased approval spoke to His grateful, obedient heart. From that time the whole control of His life was absolutely in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

[1]Isaiah xi. 2; lxi. 1, with Luke iv. 18-21.
[2]Psalm xxv. 3 f. c.

This does not mean an inert passivity on Jesus' part; it meant a strong, intelligent yielding to the Holy Spirit. It does not mean that His natural faculties of mind and will and heart were held down, not to be used. It means that they were actively, studiously used in discerning the Holy Spirit's leading, and in doing as He directed. And it means that so there came a fulness of life, an increasing life, into His faculties, mind and will and heart. Our Lord Jesus used all His powers in yielding to the inspiration and direction and control of the Holy Spirit, keeping ever open to His suggestion, and making that suggestion the law of His own action.

And the Spirit of Omnipotence, working with the gentleness of a dove, breathed upon those yielded powers, and breathed through them, even as had been planned with the first breathing of this sort, in Eden. So from the Wilderness clear up to the last Olivet command to the disciples, everything was done at the bidding, the direction of this Spirit. And so the almighty power was breathed into every word and action and bit of suffering. The one key-note of the Master's action was obedience; the result was the flooding of the Spirit's omnipotence through His obedient faculties and life.

Now, *as we follow,* this same sort of experience will be ours. What a tremendous thing to say! Yet the road was being beaten down for *our feet.* The Son of Man was simply showing to His brother-men the road we were all meant

to go, showing it by going in it. All the power that came into Jesus' life will come into ours, *if* He is given His way. For the Holy Spirit is not measured out, either to Him or to us,[1] but poured out without stint.[2] As we follow we shall be led along behind the Man going before.

There will need to be instruction, for we're so new to this road. And human teachers are sent by the Holy Spirit to help us understand, teachers in print, and teachers in shoes. There will need to be the initial act of full surrender to the Lord Jesus as Lord indeed, for most of us have been going another way than this. There will need to be a house-cleaning time, for we have let in so much of another sort.

A soft, but very honest, searching light will come flooding in through the sky-light windows. And as we instinctively go to our knees and faces because of what that light brings to light, there will be a wondrous cleansing, both by blood and by fire. Then will come a filling of our very being by this wondrous Spirit of God.

How shall we know this filling, do you ask? There will be a quiet, deep peace, at times a great joy that sings, but ever the deep peace that *holds* you, a new hunger for the old Book, and a new soft light on its pages. There will be an inner drawing to talk with God, and an intense desire to please Him, to find out what He wants you to do, and then to do it.

[1] John iii. 34 l. c.
[2] Isaiah xliv. 3; John vii. 37-39.

There will come other things too, of a less pleasant sort, temptation will come anew, and a sense—sometimes very acute—of sin, a feeling that there's a something within you fighting you, the new you. There will be an increased sensitiveness to sin, and an intense hatred of it. This is what the filling means. These things will tell you that He, the Spirit, has taken possession of what you surrendered, and that He is now at work within. These are His finger-prints.

Then there will be the outflowing side of this filling. A passion that all men may know this compassionate God, will come as a fire burning in your bones. Its flames will envelop and go through everything you are and have and can do. But under all will be the passion for pleasing the Lord Jesus. Obedience will become the chief thing, holding everything else in check, obedience to Him, pleasing Him, doing His will.

The Bethlehem Birth is the *beginning* of a new, a supernatural life within; *this* will be the actual life itself, in full vigour and power. That is the supernatural birth, this the supernatural life. That is, there is at work within you, very quietly and simply, a power more than the natural, working through the natural order, and sometimes upsetting what we may have grown to think of as the natural order. This is the Jordan Baptism of Power, the Holy Spirit taking charge, and you living a Spirit-controlled life. There's a new sign hung out over your life, " this

life is being conducted under new management." You won't say it; it won't be shouted out. It'll be louder yet. Your *life* will be telling it continually.

Power Is in the Current.

The word to emphasize here is *control.* You will find new meanings, that you had not thought of, gradually working out of it. If the Holy Spirit had control of us as He had of—Philip, for instance. He picked Philip up out of the midst of the Samaritan crowd, where he was the human centre of things, and put him down away off here in the desert,—strange contrast!—and with one lone traveller, greater contrast yet![1] If He were free to pick you and me up like that, out of these surroundings, congenial and pleasant, and set us down where we had no thought of going, and never would have gone of our own choice, and we sing as we are picked up, *and* keep on singing where we find ourselves amidst the uncongenial perhaps, the strange, the unprecedented and hard,—*if* He were free to control like that these days, there would be a present-day Pentecost beside which the Acts-Pentecost was but the beginnings of the throbbings of power.

There are some peculiarities of this "Follow Me" road here. There comes a strangely new sense of proportion. As you follow close up be-

[1] Acts viii. 4-8, 26-40.

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hind the Man ahead, you will grow *smaller,* and He will grow *larger.* No, that's not an accurate statement; you won't *grow* any smaller, you will only find out how small you are. He won't grow any larger, you will simply be finding out, and then finding out more, how large He is. It'll seem strange to most of us, finding out our real size, or lack of the size we always supposed we were. But it will come with a great awing, heart-subduing sense, to find how marvellous in size this great Man is; and yet He is our brother, as well as so immensely more.

You come to find out that power, that thing that used to be so much talked about, and defined, and yet chiefly wondered about, that power is a matter of position. The man close in behind the Lord Jesus doesn't need to be concerned about power. In fact he isn't concerned about it, only concerned with keeping close in touch. All the rest comes without our being concerned. It comes from him, the Man ahead. There is far more power, the very power of God, softly flowing and flooding its way in and through and out, than you are ever conscious of. Others will know more of the power than you. You are thinking about the Man ahead, keeping in touch, pleasing Him. Obedience has become a new word to you. It's the music of keeping step, keeping step with Him.

Have you noticed how much the current of the stream will do for you if you are out in a rowboat? All you need to do is to keep up enough

motion to hold the boat within the sweep of the current. Then your chief task is *steering*. You're not concerned about power; only about the steering. There's more power in the current than you can ever use. Your one concern is to keep out of the shallows and sucking side-eddies, away from snag and rock, and *in the current.* The power's in the current. Right steering brings all that power to bear on your little boat.

Now, power here is a matter of steering, so far as our part is concerned. We steer to get into the current of our Lord Jesus' will, and, by His grace, we use all our will power in *keeping* in that current, and out of the shallows and suction-eddies at the side. The Lord Jesus, once spit upon and crucified, now seated "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named," and *at work on earth through His Holy Spirit,*—this Lord Jesus, *free to do as He chooses,*—this is power. *He* is power.

Power is the Lord Jesus in action, and the action is always through some man's life. We steer so as to keep in touch. He acts through the man in touch. And the hungry, needy crowds know a something coming to them, with irresistible grateful sweep.

Living a Nazareth Life.

There was a third experience in this group. Our Lord Jesus lived *the Nazareth Life.* In actual order of time this came before the baptism of power. I have changed the order here, and named it third simply for the practical help in the change. With the Lord Jesus, the whole of the life was under the sway of the Holy Spirit from birth on, through the earliest conscious years, and all the years. With us, in actual experience, we are all free to confess that it has not been so from our Spirit-birth on.

That baptism of power at Jordan was without doubt a baptism of power for leadership and service. Service and leadership ever need the time of special waiting on God, and the fresh anointing by the Holy Spirit's touch, the fresh consciousness of Himself, as the only source of power in the service and leadership.

In our actual experience the Holy Spirit, coming in power, has had much to do in changing our habits, ourselves, and our lives, as well as in our service. There has been so much service that has not been backed up by the life, that many have come to feel, and to feel very deeply, that the power in service must have its roots in the human side, deep down in the daily habit of life. With our Lord Jesus that Jordan experience made no difference of this sort in His life. There was nothing needing to be changed. That

Nazareth life had been lived continuously under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Look a moment at that Nazareth life of His. It means simply a commonplace, treadmill round of life lived under the hallowing touch of the Father's presence. This was according to the original plan. It is God's presence recognized that hallows what is common. It is the absence of His presence, that is, the leaving of Him out, that makes common things common; that is, it makes the familiar thing and round *seem* and *feel* common. It's the unhallowed and unhallowing touch of the selfish, of sin, that makes things seem common, in the sense of not being holy and sweet and pure and refreshing. Sin makes things grow stale to you. Selfishness affects your eye, the way things look to you. God's presence recognized keeps things fresh. His touch upon us, ever afresh, makes us fresh. Everything we touch and see is touched by a God-freshened hand, and seen through a God-freshened eye.

Now Jesus lived this commonplace round of life, and lived it under the ever-freshening touch of His Father's presence. It isn't the thing you do, nor the things that surround you, that make your life, but the spirit that breathes out of you in the midst of the things. It's the *you* in you that makes the life, regardless of surroundings. The outer things are the accidents, you, the spirit that breathes out of you,—this is the real thing.

Jesus *lived* it. That is the tremendous fact

that Nazareth stands for. He lived what He taught, and He lived it first, and He lived it far more deeply and really than it could be taught to others. This was the basis of those few service years. Nazareth lies under the Galilean ministry. There were thirty years under the three-and-a-half-years. And the thirty years crop up into and out of the three-and-a-half. The life lived was the great fact at work, as the Man went about doing good. The hidden life of Nazareth lies open in the Galilean ministry.

When you are reading the wonderful works among the needy throngs, you are reading the biography of the Nazareth years, in their outer reach. The life you live is the thing that tells! This is the meaning of the thirty hidden years. The Father said, "My Son shall spend most of His years down there *living,* just living a true, simple Eden life; living with Me in the midst of home and carpenter shop and village." This is what the world needs so much to be taught, how to live. And the teaching must be by living, teaching by action. The message must be lived.

If we men might live Jesus! That's what the world needs. At one of the smaller meetings of the Edinburgh Conference, in 1910, a Christian gentleman from India, native of that land, said, "We don't need more Bibles in India." And then to this surprising statement, he added, "We have enough Bibles. If the Christians in India would *live the Bible,* India would be con-

verted." And I thought, that will do for America, and England, and for all the world. *Jesus lived it.* As a man in His decisions and actions, His habits and daily round, He lived the truth.

The story is told of a missionary in some part of Africa who had not had much success in his work. He was in the habit of explaining some portion of the New Testament to the people at His house. One day the portion contained the words, "give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away."[1] The people asked him if this meant what it said. He told them that it did. One of them said he would like to have the table, pointing to it; another asked for a chair, another for the bed, and so on. The missionary was rather startled at such literal taking of his teaching. He told them to come again on the morrow, and he would give his answer.

When they had gone, he and his wife had rather a heart-searching time together. They felt they had not reached the hearts of the people yet. But to do as they asked meant real sacrifice of a very personal sort. At last with much prayer they decided to meet the people where they had opened the way. And so the next day they gave their answer, and soon the house was literally bare of all its furnishings. And that night they slept on the floor, yet with a sweet peace in their hearts in the midst of this strange experience.

[1] Matthew v. 42.

The next day the people came back, carrying the furniture. They had really been testing these new-comers. "Now," they said, "we believe you. You *live* your Book. We want you to teach us." And with open hearts they listened anew to the Gospel story, and many of them accepted Christ.

The little incident reveals the unity of the race. Those Africans said what England and America and all the world is saying, "*Live it.*" Is your religion *livable?* What the world needs to-day is *a Jesus lived,* not simply taught, nor preached about, but lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. How the fire, the holy fire, of that sort of thing would catch and spread! Oh, yes, it might mean sleeping on the bare floor! That's what living-it means, the actual life overriding any mere thing that stands in the way.

Live It.

I stood one day on the abrupt edge of a little hill in a Southern Japanese city. There, in a great tree hanging out over the edge, had hung the bell that called together the faithful retainers of the lord of the province, when they were needed. There, nearly thirty years ago, a little band of Japanese youth, of noble families, had gone out at break of day one Sabbath morning, and solemnly covenanted to follow the Lord Jesus, and to devote their lives to making Him known throughout their land. Boys still in their

tender teens most of them were. And that covenant was not lightly made, for already the fires of persecution had been kindled, and these fires burned fiercely but could not compete with the fire in their hearts. And as one goes up and down the island empire of the Pacific to-day, he can find traces of their lives cropping up everywhere, like gold veins above the soil.

And as I sought to trace the hidden springs of the power at work behind all this, I found it was in the *life* of one young man, a simple, holy life burning with a passion for Jesus. In this life could be found the kindling of the tender flames burning so hotly in these young hearts. He was a young American officer engaged, by the feudal lord of the province, to teach military tactics and English. He dared not teach Christianity; that would have meant instant dismissal. So for two years he *lived* the message, so simply and lovingly that he won the love of his pupils. Then they came Sundays to his house to hear him read the English Bible, because they loved him. As he prayed the tears would run down his face, and they laughed to think a *man* would weep, but they came because they loved him. He really *loved them into the Christian life.* I was reminded of the line in Hezekiah's song of thanksgiving after his illness, "Thou hast loved my soul up from the pit." [1] This young teacher *lived his pupils to the Lord Jesus.* The latter part of his life was a sad one, but noth-

[1] Isaiah xxxviii. 17, margin.

ing can change the record of those earlier years.

I saw recently a news item telling how many million copies of the Bible are being printed every year. The item slurringly remarked that the statisticians didn't seem concerned yet with figuring up how many of them were read. But, I thought, what these Bibles need is a new binding. This Bible I carry is bound in the best sealskin, with kid-lining. It is supposed to be the best binding for hard wear. But there's a much better sort of leather than that for Bible binding; I mean *shoe leather*. The people want the Bible bound in shoe leather. When we tread this Bible out in our daily walk, when what we are becomes an illustrated copy of the Bible, the greatest revival the earth has known will come. With utmost reverence let me say that our Lord Jesus wants to come and walk around in our shoes, and live inside our garments, and touch men through us.

I remember something in my early Christian life that was a sore temptation to me. There were some Christian leaders who had helped me greatly by their preaching and writings. Then it chanced that I was thrown into personal contact with them, now one, now another. And I had a sore disappointment. It's hard to find that your idol has clay feet. It's doubtless wrong to have idols. Yet youth is the time of such idol worship. The disappointment was a very sore one. Then out of it I was led to see that the

Master never disappoints. And there was a drawing nearer to Himself alone.

And then a questioning arose: was some one perhaps looking at me? And a burning desire came to be more in life than in speech, not only for the sake of some one, perchance looking; but for the sake of that other One, the Man with eyes of flame, His looking. I need hardly tell you that it has been my blessed privilege to have had personal contact with leaders whose fragrant lives are so much more than word or act.

The Nazareth life means that the Lord Jesus lived His message, amid commonplace surroundings, in the midst of what is called the dull monotony of the daily round. That is, in the place where it is hardest to do it, He lived every bit of what He taught. And as we follow, simply, obediently, the Spirit will lead us along this same road. The same experience will happen to us. Could there be a greater evidence of the power of this Holy Spirit than to do such a thing with such as we know ourselves to be? Yet He will, *if* we let Him. A big "if" you say? But not too big to be taken out of the way, out of His way. He will live out through us what He puts into us, by and with our constant consent.

This is the meaning of the Nazareth life. Our part is obedience, simple, intelligent, strong obedience to Him. The result will be this same experience, a Nazareth life of purity and power lived by the Spirit's power.

This was the thought in the mind of Horatius

Bonar, as he wrote of the unnamed woman who anointed our Lord's head, and of whom Jesus said that what she had done should be told as a memorial of her, wherever the Gospel should be preached.

"Up and away like dew in the morning,
Soaring from earth to its home in the sun,
So let me steal away, gently and lovingly,
Only remembered by what I have done.

My name and my place and my tomb all forgotten,
The brief race of time well and patiently run,
So let me pass away peacefully, silently,
Only remembered by what I have done.

Gladly away from this toil would I hasten,
Up to the crown that for me has been won,
Unthought of by man in reward and in praises,
Only remembered by what I have done.

Up and away like the odours of sunset
That sweeten the twilight as darkness comes on,
So be my life—a thing *felt* but not noticed,
And I but remembered by what I have done.

Yes, like the fragrance that wanders in freshness,
When the flowers that it comes from are closed up and gone,
So would I be to this world's weary dwellers,
Only remembered by what I have done.

I need not be missed if my life has been bearing,
As the summer and autumn move silently on,
The bloom and the fruit and the seed of its season;
I still am remembered by what I have done.

I need not be missed if another succeed me,
To reap down these fields that in spring
I have sown;
He who ploughed and who sowed is not missed
by the reaper;
He is only remembered by what he has done.

Not myself but the truth that in life I have
spoken,
Not myself but the seed in life I have sown,
Shall pass on to ages—all about *me* forgotten,
Save the truth I have spoken, the things
I have done.

So let my living be, so be my dying,
So let my name be emblazoned, unknown,—
Unraised and unmissed I shall still be re-
membered,
Yes,—but remembered by what I have done."

The Galilean Ministry.

The fourth experience in this group was *the Galilean Ministry.* Our Lord Jesus gave Himself up to helping those in need. He devoted Himself to personal service among men. After John's imprisonment He withdrew to Galilee and ministered to the needy.

There were crowds of them. They were in sorest need of body and spirit. And He gave Himself freely out to them in glad helpful service. He met their need. He did whatever their condition called for. He ministered to their bodily needs. He mingled among them freely as an older brother or friend, holding their children on His knees while He talked with them over

their concerns and troubles. But He didn't stop there. Having won their hearts, He met their deeper needs. He comforted their hearts, talked to them one by one, drawing out their hearts, and speaking of the Father.

And as the crowds thickened, He taught and preached to the multitudes. He was a preacher, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom. He was a teacher, bit by bit, line upon line, patiently teaching and explaining to them about the Father's love, and about the true life and how to live it. Three words are used several times to characterize that Galilean ministry, teaching and preaching and healing.[1]

He warned against sin, patiently wooing erring men and women away from their sin into lives of purity, and strengthening the young and earnest in their purposes. The need of the crowd swept Him like a strong wind in the young trees. He couldn't resist their plea. The presence of a man in need, of either body or spirit, took hold of His heart. Over and over we are told that He was "moved with compassion." What a life it was! What a heart He had!

Now our Lord Jesus calls us along this bit of the road. That is to say, the Holy Spirit within us will make our hearts tender and compassionate, even as our Lord Jesus was. The crowds always moved Him tremendously. He couldn't stand the great dumb cry that the mere presence of a multitude rang in His ears. The

[1]Matthew iv. 23; ix. 35.

mere presence of some one in need, earnestly seeking, played upon the strings of His heart.

Does the crowd get hold of your heart as you elbow your way through them, or look down into their faces? Is it just a crowd to you? Or is it a great company of hungry hearts, half-starved lives, so needy for what only this Lord Jesus can give? The dumb cry of the crowds, in crowds and one by one, comes up in our ears to-day. Do you hear it? I say "dumb," for they don't know themselves what it is they need. They feel the need. Restless and chafing, they feel without knowing just what it is they lack and need.

When the Spirit that swayed the Lord Jesus comes in, He mightily affects your heart. You feel with something of our Lord's feeling. And you *must* help. You know that the one thing, the only thing, that can really radically meet their need is this Saviour Jesus. You must do something to get them really to know Him. And that something comes to be everything. Service isn't a pastime; it's a passion. That "must" sends you out on glad unheralded errands to help in any way you can, and in every way by which the Jesus message can get to them.

The "must" of His tender passion within keeps you steadily pushing ahead, regardless of not being understood by some, nor your efforts appreciated by others. The flame of that "must" takes hold of time and strength and possessions. It becomes the delight of your life to minister to

the needs of men, even as He did. You see them through His eyes. You feel their need through His heart. *And*—this is a great *and*—if you really follow as simply and fully as He leads, you will find *the same power* working out through your effort as through His, though there will be immensely more of it than you will know about.

But—there's a "but" that needs to be put in here—the key-note will not be service, but *obedience*. The need will not be the controlling thing. It will move you tremendously; it will kindle a sweet fever in your heart, a fever to help; it will take hold of your heart strings and play upon them until you almost lose control. But it must not be allowed to control. That belongs to Him alone.

The key-note is not need, nor service to meet the need, but obedience. There is a Lord to the harvest. His plans are worked carefully out. He takes Philip away from the crowded meetings in Samaria to talk with one man. It was doubtless a strategic move to touch lives in Africa, as well as to meet this one man's need. He feels the need more than you ever do or can. His ears are keener, His heart more tender. He is in command. You do as He bids. So you help most in meeting the need.

He Himself when down here left the crowds, when they were so great that the towns were overwhelmed and they had to be taken out to the country places. He would leave these crowds

and go off quietly to get alone with His Father.[1] All that tireless ministry was under the direction of Another. He went off for close touch, and fresh consultation with His Father.

The Father's Image in the Common Crowd.

Have you ever wondered what there was in those common crowds to attract our Lord Jesus? Perhaps if you have ever walked in those narrow crowded alleys called streets, in China or Japan, you may have wondered, sometimes. Tired, dirty, pinched faces, eyes vacantly staring, or else fired with low passion, high-keyed voices bickering and jangling,—all this crowds in and out on every hand. Dirt, disease, low passion, selfishness, apparent absence of anything noble or refined, are all tangled inextricably up with these in human form.

And our Lord Jesus lived in an Oriental world. Is there any world quite like it, except indeed it be the slums of our western world cities, European and American? City slums seem to be our western point of contact with the greater part of the eastern world. What was there to attract the Lord Jesus to these crowds? Their need, you answer. Yes, no doubt, their terrible need did move Him with compassion, to the hurting point.

But was there more than this? Something He

[1]Luke v. 15, 16. The language underneath here suggests a habitual going aside to pray, as an offset to the work with the crowds.

said one time has made me think there was something more, a pathetic, tremendous more, that took hold of His heart. Could it be that He saw some lingering trace of the Father's face in these faces? His eyes were very keen. He had seeing eyes. And these men have all been made in the Father's image. Has that image ever been wholly lost?—terribly blurred and scarred by sin, yes; but wholly lost? Do you think so? I think not.

Those wondrous eyes of His looking into men's tired, pinched faces, disfigured with passion or sorrow, or with sheer weariness of existence—did He see something of the Father's face looking appealingly up to be helped out of their sad plight? I wonder. Was it as though the Father's face cried out to Him out of these poor beaten faces? I think so. Do you remember that time when our Lord Jesus associated Himself so closely with just such men and women, in talking of a coming day? He says "inasmuch as ye did it to one of these My brethren, these least, ye did it unto Me."[1] Listen to those words, "My brethren"! He is thinking of just such crowds as He Himself ministered to, and as you find to-day in Oriental city and in European and American slum. What is done for them is done to Him. Their need is His need; their cry, His. It's Jesus coming to us in these crowds. Their need is Jesus Himself appealing to us. And the Jesus

[1] Matthew xxv. 40.

within us will answer with heart and life to this Jesus coming to us in the pitiable need of the crowds.

I do not mean to use that word "pitiable" chiefly in the bodily sense, though there's so much of that. But it has a deeper meaning. Here is this fair young face turned to yours in the social group, here this strong young man needing nothing that money can buy, but yet very needy, both of them. In their young, eager faces the hidden away image, the not-yet-touched-into-new-life image of the Father looks out asking for help, help out into growth amidst so much that holds back. Inasmuch as your light, tactful touch is given here, it is done unto Jesus. Jesus is helped into the life, the God-image crowded back within is helped to get out into free expression.

You may not be sent to some distant field as young Borden was. Your personal place may be at home. But the crowd, the need, is everywhere; at home, in the social circle, and among the men driven by the passion for business and for pleasure, in this dangerously prosperous land of ours. Need of body even here, and deeper need of spirit. Much more tact is required, Spirit-born tact and patience and alertness, to touch and help these.

But the Spirit will guide. He has a passion for men in their need. He has exquisite tact in touching men under all circumstances. He will take command of your life here as elsewhere. He will lead you into a life of personal service in

helping men. And He will lead you *in* that service. This is the Galilean Ministry which will work out in your experience as the Holy Spirit has control. This is a bit of the "Follow Me" roadway.

These are the four experiences of power and privilege. They are as the great underlying experiences of our Lord's career. The other experiences grew up out of these. These were the warp threads in the loom of His life. The others were woven into these. This is the main road that He trod. It is the main road of this "Follow Me" journey. It is along this road, between its beginning and end, that we shall run down into the valley-road stretches, and run up to the stretches along the hilltops.

3. THE VALLEYS — EXPERIENCES OF SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE

The Never-absent Minor.

Here the road begins to drop down into the valleys. It runs sharply down, and on, through some wild gulches and ravines thick with lurking danger, with the upper-lights almost lost in the deep black darkness. It is darkness that can be felt more than the Egyptian darkness ever was. It proves to be the valley of the shadow of death, then—of death itself, before the upward turn comes.

The weaver we were speaking of finds some strange shuttle-threads to be woven into the pattern, gray black, ugly black threads, and red threads almost wet and sticky in their blood-like redness.

Yet this is part of the road that was trodden, and that is still waiting to be trodden by feet sturdy and bold enough to go on down into the shadows, before the upward turn is reached again. And these threads will work out a rare beauty in the pattern being woven.

Is there perfect music without the under-chording of the minor? Not to human ears. For

they are attuned to life as it has really come to be. And the minor chord is in real life, never quite absent; and the minor chord is in the true human heart, never wholly absent. And only the music with the minor blended in is the real music of human life. Only it can play upon the finest strings of the human heart.

But this sort of thing, the getting of beauty out of ugly threads, the getting of music where there is discord, the upward turn again of the valley road, all this is a bit of the touch of God upon life, where the hurt of sin has come in. Only the Lord Jesus can make music where sin had brought in and wrought out such discord. Only He can change the weaving into beauty, where the ugly slimy sin-threads have come in. He can lead up again out of the depths, but only He. His blood, Himself, is the thing added that makes music where no melody had ever been a possible thing; and gives the weaver's threads the transforming touch that works beauty where there was only the ugly; and pulls you up again to the higher levels. The good never comes out of bad. It comes only by something radically different coming in and overcoming the bad.

In Seoul they showed us the great bell hung at the crossing of certain chief streets there. And then they told us the bell's legend. In early twilight times an artisan had made a great bell at the king's command, but the tone of it was not pleasing to the royal ears. So a second one was made, and a third, but neither was satisfac-

tory. Then the king said that if the man did not make a bell with pleasing tones his life should be forfeited for his failure. This was very distressing for the poor unfortunate bell-moulder.

His daughter, a young girl in her teens, either had a vision, or felt within herself that a sacrifice was the thing needful to give the bell its true tone. And so she resolved to give herself to save her father, and with rare fortitude one night she plunged into the great pot of molten metal. And the tone of the bell was so sweet and musical that the king was delighted. And the maker, instead of being killed, was highly honoured. So ran the simple bit of Korean folk-lore.

We ran across legends quite like it in other parts of the Orient. They all seemed to point, with other similar evidence, to the feeling deep down in human consciousness of the need of sacrifice. Is it a bit of an innate instinct in our common human nature, that only through sacrifice can the hurt of life be healed? However this be, it certainly is true, that the touch of Him who gave His life clear out for men, that touch is the thing, and the only thing, that can make music where there was only discord. It is only His pierced hand upon weaver and web that touches ugly threads into beauty as they are woven into the fabric of life. Only He can lead us up out of the valley of death up to the road of life along the high hilltops.

The Wilderness.

You remember, there were four experiences of suffering and sacrifice in our Lord Jesus' life. The first of these was *the Wilderness Temptation.* That rough road He took led straight to and through a wilderness. He was tempted. He was tempted like as we are. He was tempted more cunningly and stormily than we ever have been.

It was a pitched battle, planned for carefully, and fought with all the desperateness of the Evil One at bay against overwhelming forces. It was planned by the Holy Spirit, and fought out by our Lord in the Spirit's strength. For forty full lone days it ran its terrific course. But our Lord's line of defence never flinched. The Wilderness and Waterloo, those two terrific matchings of strength, the one of the spirit, the other of the physical, both were fought out on the same lines. Wellington's only plan for that battle was to *stand,* to resist every attempt to break his lines all that fateful day. The French did the attacking all day, until Wellington's famous charge came at its close.

Our Lord Jesus' only plan for the Wilderness battle was to *stand,* having done all to stand, to resist every effort to move Him a hair's breadth from His position. That battle brought Him great suffering; it took, and it tested, all His strength of discernment, and decision, of determined set persistence, and of dependent, deep-

breathed praying. And through these the gracious power of the Spirit worked, and so the victory, full joyous victory, came.

Now it comes as a surprise to some of us to find that the "Follow Me" road leads straight to the same Wilderness. No, it is not just the same, none of these experiences mean as much to us as they did to Him. They are always less. But then they mean everything to us! We will be tempted. So surely as one sets himself to follow the blessed Master, there's one thing he can always count upon—temptation. Sooner or later it will come, usually sooner and later. So the Evil One serves notice to contest our allegiance to the new Master.

The tempter sees to it that you are tempted. That belongs to his side of the conflict. And quickly and skilfully, and with good heart he goes at his task. Through the weak or evil impulses and desires within us, and through every avenue without, those dearest to us, and every other, he will begin and continue his cunning approaches. It is well to understand this clearly, and so be ready. The closer you follow this Man ahead, the more, and the more surely, will you be tempted. It is one of the things you can count on—temptation.

But, steady there, steady! the tempter can't go a step beyond attacking, without your help. He can't make a single break in your lines from without. The only knob to the door of your life is on the *inside*. Temptation never gets in with-

out help from within. I have said that the Wilderness spelled two words for our Lord Jesus, temptation *and* victory. We may use His spelling if we will. A temptation is a chance for a victory. Begin singing when temptation comes; out of it, resisted, comes a new steadiness in step, and a new confidence in the victorious Man of the Wilderness.[1]

But let me tell you *how* the victory comes. It comes through our Lord Jesus. And it comes by His working *through your decision* to resist to the last ditch.

"Lead Us Not."

The Lord Jesus gave us two special temptation prayers to make. The one is: "Lead us not into temptation."[2] That petition has been a practical puzzle to many of us, and the explanations not always quite clear. Would God lead us into temptation? we instinctively ask. And the answer seems to be both "yes" and "no."

The "yes" means that character can come only through right choice. We must decide what our attitude toward wrong shall be. It is only temptation resisted that makes the beginnings of strength. Before temptation comes there may be innocence but never virtue. Innocence resisting temptation becomes virtue. The temptation is the intense fire in which the raw iron of innocence changes into the toughened, tempered

[1] James i. 2, 3. [2] Matthew vi. 13.

steel of virtue. It is essential to character that it resist the wrong. It is choice that makes character. The angels in the presence of God are continually choosing to remain loyal to Him. Choice includes choosing not to choose the evil, to refuse it. Adam was tempted; the temptation was bad, only bad; but it could have been made an opportunity to rise up into newness of strength. Job was led into temptation, and he failed when the fires grew in heat, and touched him close enough; and then he learned new dependence on God alone instead of on his own integrity.

That's the "yes" side of the answer. We must decide what we will do with evil. The presence of evil forces choice upon us. The one thing God longs for is our choice, free and full choice. Freedom of choice is the image of God in which every man is made. We are like Him in *power,* in the right to choose; we become like Him in *character* when we choose only the right. God would lead us into opportunity for the choice on which everything else hinges. The prayer says: "Lead us not into temptation." The prayer becomes the choice. It reveals the decision of your heart. The man who thoughtfully makes the prayer makes the choice.

And with that goes the "no" side. Certainly God would not lead us into the temptation to do wrong.[1] And so He has made a way—it's a new way since our Lord Jesus was here—a way by which we can have the full opportunity for

[1] James i. 13.

choice, and yet be sure of always choosing the right, and so growing into His image in character. To pray, "Lead us not into temptation," is practically saying, "I will go as Thou leadest. Lead me. I am willing to be led. I was not ever thus, nor *prayed* that Thou shouldst lead me on. I loved to choose and see my path, but now—but now, lead *Thou* me on. Here I am, willing to be led. I put out my hands for Thee to grasp and lead where Thou wilt. I'll sing, 'Where He may Lead, I'll Follow." This is the only safe road through the Wilderness. We yield wholly to His control.

May I say reverently, this was the way our Lord entered and passed through the Wilderness, wholly under the control of Another—the Holy Spirit. He chose to yield to that control. The Spirit acted through His yielding consent, and flooded in the power that brought the victory. Even He in His purity needs so to do. How much more we in our absence of purity, and so absence of strength. "Lead us not" means practically, that we get in behind this victorious Lord Jesus. We refuse to go alone.

The Wilderness spells only defeat for the man who goes alone. We must yield wholly to this great lone Man who went before. We lean upon Him. We trust Him as Saviour from the sin that temptation yielded to has already brought. We will trust His lead wholly now as temptation comes. We will stick close and be wholly pliant in His hands. This is the first temptation prayer

our Lord gives us. It means our utter surrender to His leadership.

Then there is a second prayer for temptation use: "Watch and pray that ye *enter not* into temptation."[1] This goes with the other. It is the partner prayer. Be ever on the watch, and pray, that you may not *enter* into temptation. Guard prayerfully against acting independently of your Leader. Watch against the temptation. Watch yourself lest you be inclined to go off alone, to break away from His lead. For there will be only one result then, defeat. These two prayers together show the way to turn temptation into victory,—"lead not," "enter not." A temptation is a chance for a victory if you never meet it alone, but always under the lead of the great Victor of the Wilderness.

Then it may help to put the thing in another way. There are two steps in victory over temptation. The first is recognition. To recognize that the thing coming for decision is a temptation to something wrong,—that's the first step in victory. It pushes the temptation out into the open. You say plainly, "This is something to be resisted." The second step as you set yourself to resist is to plead the blood of the Lord Jesus. That means pleading His victory over the tempter. That's the getting in behind Him and depending wholly upon Him.

"Follow Me" takes us into the Wilderness, and leads us into victory there. There we will

[1] Matthew xxvi. 41.

learn more about prayer, and music, and the Master, and get new strength and courage on this stretch of the valley road.

Gethsemane.

At the farther extreme of the service years, there came to the Lord Jesus the other three of these dark experiences, all three close together. On the night of the betrayal came *the Gethsemane Agony.* That was a very full evening. Around the supper table they had gathered and talked, and the Lord Jesus had made His last, tender but fruitless effort to touch Judas' heart by touching his feet. There was the long quiet heart-talk in the supper room after Judas had gone out, "and it was night" for poor Judas.[1]

Then the talk continued as they walked across the city within view of the great brass vine on Herod's temple, so beautiful in the light of the full moon. And then, as they walk through the narrow, shadowed streets, the shadows come into the Lord Jesus' spirit and words.[2] Now they are outside the wall of the city, out in the open, under the blue, and with upturned face, the great pleading prayer is breathed out.[3] Now they are across the Kidron, and now in among the shadows of the huge olive trees of the garden called Gethsemane.

It's quite dark and late. He leaves the dis-

[1]John xiii., xiv. [2]John xv., xvi. [3]John xvii.

ciples to rest under the trees, and with the inner three He pushes a bit farther on. And now He pushes on quite alone in the farther lone recesses of the woods. And now the intensity of His spirit bends His body as He kneels, then is prostrate. And the agony is upon Him. He is fighting out the battle of the morrow. He is sinless, but on the morrow He is to get under the load of a world's sin; no, it was yet more than that, He was to be Himself reckoned and dealt with as sin itself. All the horror of that broke upon Him under those trees, more intensely than it had yet. The brightness of the full moon made the shadows of the trees very dark and black, but they seemed as nothing to this awful inky black shadow of the sin load that would come, no longer in shadow but actually, on the morrow.

The agony of it is upon Him as He falls prostrate on the ground, under the tense strain of spirit. Out of the struggle a bit of prayer reaches our awed ears, "*If it be possible* let this cup pass away from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And so tense is the strain that an angel comes to strengthen. With what reverent touch must he have given his help. Even after that the great drops of bloody sweat came. But now a calmer mood comes. The look full in the face of what was coming, the realizing more clearly how the Father's plan must work out, these help to steady Him. Again a bit of prayer is heard, "Since this cannot pass away; since

only so can Thy plan for the world be accomplished Thy—will—be—done." The load of the world's sin almost broke His heart that dark night under the olives. It actually did break His heart on the morrow. This is the meaning of Gethsemane, intense suffering of spirit because of the sin of others.

And at first thought you say, surely there can be no following for any of us in this sore lonely experience of His. And there cannot. He was alone there as on the morrow. None of us can go through what He went through there. For, it was *for us,* and for our sin that He went through it. And yet there *is* a following, if different in degree and in depth of meaning, yet a very real following. While Gethsemane stands a lone experience for Jesus, yet there will be *a* Gethsemane for him who follows fully where He asks us to go.

There will be a real suffering of spirit because of the sin of others. We will see the world around us through those pure, seeing eyes of His. We will *feel* the ravages of sin in those we touch, with something of the feeling of His heart. Close walking with Christ brings pain and it will bring it more, and more acutely. We will see sin as He does, in part. We will feel with our fellow-men toiling in its grip and snare as He did, in part. There will be sore suffering of spirit. This is the Gethsemane experience, and it will not grow less but more.

"'O God,' I cried, 'why may I not forget?
These halt and hurt in life's hard battle
Throng me yet.
Am I their keeper? Only I? To bear
This constant burden of their grief and care?
Why must I suffer for the others' sin?
Would God my eyes had never opened been!'

And the Thorn-crowned and Patient One
Replied, *'They thronged Me too. I too have seen.'*

'But, Lord, Thy other children go at will,'
I said, protesting still.
'They go, unheeding. But these sick and sad,
These blind and orphan, yea and those that sin
Drag at my heart. For them I serve and groan.
Why is it? Let me rest, Lord. I *have* tried—'

He turned and looked at me:
'But I have died!'

'But, Lord, this ceaseless travail of my soul!
This stress! This often fruitless toil
These souls to win!
They are not mine. I brought not forth this host
Of needy creatures, struggling, tempest-tossed—
They are not *mine.'*

He looked at them—the look of One divine;
He turned and looked at me. *'But they are mine!'*

'O God, I said, 'I understand at last.
Forgive! And henceforth I will bond-slave be
To thy least, weakest, vilest ones;
I would not more be free.'

He smiled and said,
'It is to me.'"[1]

[1]Lucy Rider Meyer.

The word Gethsemane has not been used accurately sometimes. And it is not good that it is so, for it keeps us from appreciating what the real meaning is. In poetry and otherwise it has been used for some great experience of sorrow in which the soul has struggled alone. But there are two things in the Gethsemane experience that give it a meaning quite different from such. The Gethsemane sorrow is on account of the sin of others, *and* it comes to us through our own consent, of our own action. We need not go through the Gethsemane experience save as we make the choice that comes to include this. It is only as we *choose* to follow fully, close up to His bleeding side, where the Lord Jesus is leading, that this experience of pain will come.

Moses knew what this meant. As he came from the presence of God in the mount the sin of the people seemed so terrible, that the fear that possibly it could not be forgiven unless he made some sacrifice sweeps over him and came out as a great sob.[1] The sight of their sin brought sorest pain to his spirit. Paul tells us there was a continual cutting of a knife at his heart because of his racial kinsfolk, their sin, their stubbornness in sin, the awful blight upon their lives.[2] There was sore, lone, unspeakable pain of spirit because he felt so keenly the sin of others. This is the Gethsemane experience. Have you felt something like this as you have come in touch with the sin, the blighted lives, the wreckage of lives

[1]Exodus xxxii. 31, 32. [2]Romans ix. 1-3.

among both poor and rich, lower class and better? You will if you follow where He leads.

Calvary.

Then came the morrow. *The experience of Calvary* came hard on the heels of Gethsemane. The pain of spirit became both pain of body and pain of spirit, intensified clear beyond what the night before had anticipated. How shall I trust myself to speak of that morrow, or you to listen? Yet, let us hold still, and, for a great purpose, look at it again, if only for a moment, that the meaning of it, the flame of it may take fresh hold, and consume us anew.

Gethsemane was followed by a sleepless night, while bitter hate brought its utmost iniquity and persistence to hound this Man to death. Nine, of the next morning, found Him hanging, nailed on the cross, crowned with the cruel mocking thorn crown. From nine till three He hung, while the strange darkness came down over all nature from noon till three, the blackness of midnight shutting out the brightness of noon. The Father's presence was withdrawn. This tells the bitterness of the cross for Jesus as does nothing else.

It was out of a breaking heart that the cry was wrung, "My God, My God, why didst *Thou* forsake Me?" When you can penetrate that darkness you may be able to tell how really Jesus took our place, and suffered as sin for us,—not

before. Then with a great shout of victory He gave up His life. His great heart broke. He died. He died literally of a broken heart. The walls of that muscle were burst asunder by the terrific strain on His spirit.

He died for us. He who so easily held off the murderous mob with their stones, now holds Himself to that cross,—*for us.* This is the Calvary experience. It can be felt, but never explained fully; words fail. It can be yielded to until our hearts are melted to sobs, but never fully told in its tenderness and strength to others. It can bring us down on knees and face at His feet as His love-slaves for ever,—so is its story best told to others. That breaking heart breaks ours. That pierced side pierces through all our stubborn resistance. That face haunts us. Its scars tell of sin, ours. Its patient eyes tell of love, His. Was there ever such sin? Was there ever such love? Was there ever such a meeting of sin and purity, of love and hate, of God's best and Satan's worst?

Surely there can be no following *here!* And, strange to say, the answer is both a "no," with a double underscoring of emphasis, and a "yes," that will come to have a like emphatic underlining. *No,* there can be no following. Here, He is the Lone Man who went before. And He remains the Lone Man in what He did, and in the extent of His suffering. There is only one Calvary. There was only the One whose death could settle the sin score for us men. It is only

by His death for our sin that there is any way out of our sore plight of sin, and sin's own result. There the Lord Jesus did something that had to be done, for the Father's sake; there He broke the slavery of our sin; there He broke our hearts by His love. There He stands utterly alone in what He did. Calvary has no duplicate, nor ever can have. That is the emphatic "no" side of the answer. There can be no following on that road.

And yet,—and yet, there can be. There is a "yes" side to the true, full answer. There will be *a* Calvary experience for every one who really follows. His was *the* Calvary experience, ours is *a* Calvary experience. It does not mean what His meant for the world. But it enters into the marrow of our very being, and means everything to us. It means that as I really follow there will come to me experiences of sacrifice that will take the very life of my life—*if* I do not pull back, but persist on following the beckoning hand. And it means too, that there will be in a secondary, a minor sense, a redemptive value in my suffering. That suffering will be a real thing in completing the work of some man's redemption.

Listen to Paul. He has been writing to the Corinthian Christians in much detail, of the suffering he has been going through of both body and spirit, and then he adds, *"so then death working in me worketh life in you."*[1] The same thought underlies that wonderful bit of tender,

[1] II Corinthians iv. 12.

tactful pleading in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the same letter. The same thing is put in a rather startling way in the epistle to the Colossians,[1] "I . . . fill up on my part, in my flesh, *that which is lacking* of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church."

This fits in with the thought in that word "began" in the beginning of the book of Acts.[2] In a very real sense our Lord depends upon our faithful following to supplement among men the great thing which only He could do. Paul knew *a* Calvary experience, and Peter and John, and so has, and will, every one who follows the pierced hand that beckons. Ask Horace Tracey Pitkin at Paotingfu if he understands this. And the China soil wet with his blood gives answer, and so do the lives of those who were won to Christ through such suffering throughout China. Ask David Livingstone away in the inner heart of Africa, and those whom no man can number in every nation, who have known this sort of thing by a bitter, sweet experience, some by violence, some by the yet more difficult daily giving out of the life in hidden away corners.

The Underground Road.

And hard following this came *the Burial in Joseph's Tomb.* "Christ died for our sins and . . . He was buried."[3] "Joseph took the body, . . . and laid it in his own new tomb, which he

[1] Colossians i. 24. [2] Acts i. 1.
[3] I Corinthians xv. 3, 4.

had hewn out in the rock, and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb." [1] "The chief priests and the Pharisees . . . went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, the guard (of Roman soldiers) being with them." [2]

Out of that sealed tomb comes with the emphasis of action, the emphasis of death, this word, "except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone." [3] The only pathway of life is the underground road. For our Lord, Joseph's tomb made the death clear beyond doubt. The tomb was the climax of the death. He was dead and buried. For him who follows it means this, *a burial clear out of sight in the soil of the need of men's lives.* He who simply gets in behind and faithfully follows will find himself actually being buried in the needs of men. And only where there is such a burial can there come resurrection power into the life.

I remember a friend in Philadelphia, a young man who resigned an influential position to go out as a missionary in India. And another friend not at all in sympathy remarked sneeringly in my hearing, "He's gone to bury himself in India." He spoke more aptly than he knew. The years since have told what a blessed burial that was. For scores of lives in Southern India have known the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus through his service.

[1] Matthew xxvii. 59, 60. [2] Matthew xxvii. 62, 66.
[3] John xii. 24.

Do you remember when the Greeks came to Philip with their great plea, "Sir, we would see Jesus"?[1] Whether really from Greece, or Greek-speaking people from elsewhere, or simply non-Jewish people, they represented the outer, non-Jewish world coming to Jesus. The Jew door was slammed violently in His face, but here was the great outer-world door opening. And He had come to a world! But instantly, across the vision so attractive to His eyes, there came another vision, never absent from His spirit those last weeks, the vision black and forbidding, of *a cross*. And He knew that only through this vision of a cross could the vision of a world coming be realized. And out of the sore stress of spirit, that for a few brief moments shook Him, came the quietly spoken, tense words, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone."

The road to Greece is not over the sea here to the west, not the overland caravan route up north through Asia Minor; it is the road down through Joseph's tomb. That was true for Him. It was by that road that He so marvellously reached the Greeks and all the world. And this is true for us. It is only by this road that we can reach out to the crowds with the reach-in that touches heart and life.

These are the four experiences of suffering and sacrifice. This is the dip-down in the "Follow Me" road where it runs through a

[1] John xii. 20-32.

darkly shadowed valley. These are the dark and red shuttle-threads being woven into the web, by repeated sharp blows of the batten-beam. These are the minor chords that, coming up through the strains of music, give a peculiar sweetness to it.

What Is Sacrifice?

Now you will note that the chief thing in all this is *sacrifice*. The chief thing in all of our Lord's life, clear from Bethlehem to Calvary and the tomb, was sacrifice. It runs ever throughout; it finds its tremendous climax in the cross. And the word to put in here in quietest tone—the quietest is tensest, and goes in deepest—the word is this: *Following means sacrifice.* It means sacrifice as really for the follower as for the Lone Man ahead.

That word "sacrifice" has practically been dropped out of the dictionary of the Christian Church of the western world. It has not been wholly lost. There is much real sacrifice, no doubt, under the surface. But, in the main, it is one of the lost words in our generation of the Church. We are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing that we cannot provide by the lavish use of money; so we think. And the loss of that word explains the loss from our working dictionaries of another word, *power.* For the two words always go together.

But please note what sacrifice means. For we

may get confused in the use of words, and like the Hebrews in Isaiah's day call things by the wrong names.[1] Sacrifice does not merely mean suffering, though there may be much suffering included in it. But there may be suffering where there is no sacrifice. It does not mean privation, though there may be real painful privation in it. But again there may be much privation and pain without any element of sacrifice entering in.

The heart of sacrifice is that it is voluntary, and that it really costs you something. It is something that would not come to you unless you decide to let it come. It is wholly within your power to keep it away, and it brings with it real pain or cost of some kind. Sacrifice means doing something, or doing without something, that so help may come to another, even though it costs you some real personal suffering of spirit, or of body, or both, or lack of what you should have and would enjoy.

And please note that sacrifice is *not* the keynote of the "Follow Me" life. We are not to seek for sacrifice. Perhaps that is quite a needless remark. We are not likely to seek for it. No one loves a cross any more than did Peter, when he had the hardiness to rebuke his Master.[2] And yet we remember those earnest souls in earlier times, who shut themselves up behind monastic walls, and inflicted pain upon themselves by privation and by bodily self-infliction. And we cannot help admiring their earnestness

[1] Isaiah v. 20. [2] Matthew xvi. 21-28.

and saintliness, even while we see how morbid was their conception of life, and how completely they got the true order reversed. And there can be found some here and there, among us to-day, with the same idea.

But the key-note of the true life is not sacrifice. It is obedience. Sacrifice is something coming in the pathway of obedience. There come the places and times where you cannot obey without making a sacrifice. Obedience involves sacrifice. And the sacrifice may be of the very real, cutting, hurting sort, personally. The whole instinct of one's being is against it. This seems to be carrying things quite too far, we think. And so the test is on. The sacrifice is not sought. It is shrunk from with all the vigour of one's nature. Obedience means that you go steadily on, no matter how it cuts, or how much it costs.

And the motive under the obedience is usually the decisive thing. If that motive be a personal passion for the Lord Jesus, then you only wait long enough to be quite clear of His leading, of what He would have you do. And then you go on, regardless of the personal loss or pain to yourself. The key-note of the "Follow Me" music is obedience, simple, sane, poised, full obedience.

How Much It Cost God.

One day out in Illinois, while visiting a small church college, I was told this story of one of the students. He had felt very deeply the need of the foreign mission lands, and the plea being made for men to volunteer to go out as missionaries. And after much thought and prayer he had decided to volunteer. But he felt he must first get his mother's consent. So he wrote of his purpose and asked if she were willing that he should go. In due time the reply came back. It was a mother's letter to her son, full of a mother's endearments. But the paper was marked with tear-stains. She gave her consent. She said, "I'm glad my boy wants to go, and I'm glad to have you go, but"—and here the writing was blurred with the teardrops that had plainly fallen as she wrote—"*I never knew before how much it cost God to give His Son.*"

There was the whole story of sacrifice as it came to that mother. There was the sore need of the people in foreign lands for the Gospel of Christ. That need had not been met. The need in its sore pressure had become an emergency, largely an unappreciated emergency. The tragedy of an unmet emergency had moved the son's heart to action, under the touch of the Holy Spirit, and then it came to the mother's heart. The decision rested with her. Her inner heart told her the Master's desire. She obeyed, with exquisite pain in her heart over the separation,

maybe separation for life, from her son. The key-note is obedience, even though it may mean cutting pain.

The whole test of love and of life is in sacrifice yielded to as the need may come. In God's first plan of life there is no sacrifice. God never chooses sacrifice as His first choice for any one, not even for His Son. But sin is here, an abnormal, foreign thing. Life is shot through and through with its ugly markings. You can't go a foot's length down the pathway of obedience without finding the keen edge of a knife, freshly sharpened, held across the path with its cutting edge toward you, challenging your advance, doing its utmost to hold you back.

And only as the breast is bared to the cutting until a bit of your red life stains the knife, only so can there be any of the power of God in, or through, or out of, your life. But turn that sentence around, and smile in your heart as you remember this, as you do push quietly on past the cutting knife, and say never a word about the knife or the sharp pain—the best folks never talk about their sacrifices, they are too intent on the Man just ahead,—as a man so does, there come into his life a fire and a fragrance that burns and breathes out wherever he goes.

It is sin that makes sacrifice. Sin did the carpenter work on the cross, our sin. Sin grew the thorns, and then served as weaver to make the mocking, cutting crown—our sin, yours and mine. Love yields to the sacrifice, His love for

us, His love in us for the others. Sin is everywhere. Its finger-print is in nature, and its scar on human life. And sin' ravages make cruel need, and need intensified makes emergency, and these involve sacrifice as we rise to meet need and emergency.

And love is everywhere. That is, it would be, it will be, if it can find human feet to carry it. It will be if our Lord may have His way. Sacrifice is Love's healing shadow. Sacrifice is love giving the oil and wine of its own life to bind up the wounds that sin has made. The "Follow Me" road is marked red, so you trace His footprints who went ahead, and theirs who follow.

What Obedience Has Meant for Some.

But, no one can decide for another what obedience may mean for him. You may not tell me, nor I you. It is intensely interesting to note what obedience has meant to some. It led Paul to give up inheritance and family prestige, social standing, fellowship in university circles, a home life of scholarly quiet and research, and to be reproached and ostracized, to be homeless having no certain abiding place, dependent on his own hands for daily bread, as he went burning like a flame from end to end of the Roman world. And at the end it meant a prison, and block and axe.

I met a rare Christian nobleman in London, of an old, honoured family, of whom a friend told

me this. This nobleman had a large inheritance. Among other things a certain estate. He felt led to place the estate on the market, get the best possible return for it, and then with his shrewd business sense, prayerfully to place the proceeds where he felt they would help best the cause of Christ. And to a friend who expressed appreciation and approval of such unusual action, he quietly said, "I want no praise for this; if the poor Jew had to give one-tenth, surely a rich Christian can do very much more." That was what obedience, at that point, meant to him.

I knew a Canadian woman who had been led to a higher level in her Christian life. A friend put into her hands a bit of manuscript, to which she had access, thinking it would help her in her new life. The manuscript was read, and returned through the friend to its writer. He had intended having it published with some others, if a publisher could be found willing to accept it. Then he had felt that he would do nothing with it until very clear leading came. He did not want to do anything, except as he was led. If the Master wanted to use the writing, it was there if He chose to give the word for its use.

Sometime after as the woman was busy with her nursing work she was on night duty, and had her quiet time in an interval of the night's round. As she was reading her Bible and praying, she said, "A voice said to me very quietly, 'Send

Mr. Blank twenty-five dollars to publish ———'" [naming the title of the article she had read]. Twenty-five dollars taken out of her frugal savings would leave quite a hole. But the impression that came with the message was unmistakable. And so the money was sent. And it was received by the writer of the manuscript as the Master's answer for which he had been waiting. And that was the beginning of some little books whose messages have been graciously used to bring help to many lives. Her bit of obedience was a link in the chain, and so a bit of her life is in the printed messages the Master has been using. The tracing of red was on the gold, and on the messages sent out. That was what obedience meant that time to her. And obedience usually has its hardest time when its struggle is over a bit of gold.

A friend took us driving one day up in Scotland, and told this story as we passed through a beautiful estate. A few generations back it belonged to one who followed fully. And in response to the clear inner leading the estate was sold, and the proceeds used in sending the message of a crucified, risen Christ, out to the farther ends of the earth.

It was at the same time that a like incident came personally to me of another Scottish friend of our Lord Jesus. The beckoning call was so distinct, and the answering need so clear in its echo, that he planned a moderate annuity for the remainder of his life, and loosed out all the rest

of his wealth on the same sort of errand. I do not say you should do something of this sort. And you may not tell me what I shall do. Only the Master has that privilege. But we can urge each other to have trained ears, and soft heart, and obedient will; ears for what the Master is saying, a heart softened by the warmth of His, a will gladly obedient to His slightest wish.

Necessity—Luxury.

And our Lord Jesus speaks very distinctly, though so quietly. His meaning is unmistakably plain to listening ears. He is quite apt to take you off for a little walk and talk. What kind of a house do you live in? What proportion of your income do you spend on yourself? What is in those safety-deposit boxes? How much would it mean to Him if your signature at the bottom of legal papers put some property at His disposal? Take a look through your wardrobe; who and what controls there? No, I'm not talking about money, nor about missions, only about a personal passion for the Lord Jesus, and about the passion *in* Him for His world.

"But," you say to yourself, "there's danger of going to extremes here, is there not?" Yes, there is; you are quite right. Extremes are bad, we should be on our guard against them. There is nothing more desirable in these days than sane, poised judgment, a sound mind. And be it keenly marked that the man who is really

swayed by the Holy Spirit is peculiarly a sane, well-balanced man. That is one mark of the Spirit's presence.

Yet there's more to be said. *Our Lord Jesus went to extremes.* He went to a great extreme on the cross, did He not? Is there any extreme like that of Gethsemane? and Calvary? It is because He went to such extremes, and the West knows about it, that the West is so radically different from the East, and that you and I are redeemed from the slavery of sin, with a sweet peace in our hearts, and so much happiness in our lives.

The distressing thing is that there is so much of going to extremes. Go through the Christian homes of the western world to-day, and you find home appointments, wardrobes, safety-deposit boxes, bank books, title deeds, all spelling out one word, spelled in capital letters, EXTREMES. But that key-note, named several times already, gives the only safe way—*obedience.* We need to be on our guard, not so much lest we go to extremes at either extreme, but that we *obey* our Lord Jesus. That, and that only, leads to the wise, well-balanced judgment and action. Obedience to Him means true sanity.

Where do you draw the deciding line between necessity and luxury? How do you define those two words? What is necessity? And what is luxury? Simple definitions help much in getting clear ideas. The dictionary says, a necessity is something you must have. And a luxury, in its

root meaning, is an extravagance, something "wandering beyond the proper boundary." The trouble is to know how to draw the line when it comes to one's own affairs. There is such a big difference between what you want and what you need. And often we don't want to go into such distinctions. They might bother our consciences a bit. It seems difficult to keep one's poise in such things. Some godly people go to extremes in not providing sufficiently for real needs. Most of us go to the other extreme. Where does the true dividing line come in?

Well, I think you can say truly that *whatever keeps up and adds to your strength* can properly be called *a necessity*. All beyond that line is luxury. It is the part of wisdom to provide carefully and well for necessities. Luxury is *bad*, for it really saps our strength. It makes a man less vigorous in every way. And yet more can be said. The question of need comes in. Luxury is wrong because of the crying need of men for what the money spent in luxury would bring to them. I think chiefly now of the need of their lives for what can come only through a knowledge of Christ. The bitter cry of the common people against Louis XVI, at the time of the French Revolution, was that the royal family lived on the costliest delicacies while many of the common people were actually starving. They thought that was the chief crime to be expiated at the guillotine.

What is necessary for one's strength moves on

a sliding scale. As years come, and the sort of work one does and his strength change, his needs increase. What might at one time have been reckoned luxury is now a real necessity for his best strength and work. *Whatever ministers to one's strength is a necessity.* All above this becomes luxury, and so is both hurtful to strength, and wrong in itself.

A missionary returning to his home-land, on furlough, noted on his first return home that what had been considered luxuries before he left, were now reckoned necessities; on his second furlough he noted again that what had been reckoned luxury on his first return was now counted necessity. And each return home found this condition repeating itself.

It reminded me of the experience of Sir John Franklin in one of his Arctic explorations. His ship was hemmed in by an ice-field so that progress was impossible. All he could do was to calculate his longitude and latitude, and wait. The next day he was still hemmed in, and so far as he could see, was exactly where he had been on the previous day. But on calculating longitude and latitude again, he was surprised to find that the ship had drifted several miles backward from the position of the previous day.

It would be a sensible thing for us to make frequent calculations, and find out where we are, and prayerfully steer a changed course if we've been drifting. But we can't decide such questions for each other, and they can't be decided by

what another does. They can only be decided alone on one's knees with the Master, with the Book, and perhaps a map of the world at hand. We need both the Word of God, and a view of the world of God to shape our judgment. No, it's not a question of money primarily, nor of missions, only of personal loyalty to our Lord Jesus, and to the passion of His heart.

Grafted.

Have you noticed the significance of that word "abide" which our Lord used on the night of His betrayal?[1] "Abide" means a grafting process; we were branches in the vine, but we were broken off by sin. The only way to abide in that vine is by being grafted in. "Abide" means grafted. But the grafting process has two wounds. It means a knife used twice. It means a wound in the vine-stock, and our Master flinched not there. It means likewise a wound in the branch to be grafted in. Just as surely as the knife must make the incision into the stock, it must also cut the end of the branch before it can be grafted in. Our Master flinched not. How about you and me when it comes to the knife, with its sharp cutting edge, and slash and sting?

Perhaps this explains why there's so little life, so little sap-flow, so little fruit. If you follow along the narrow road your progress is sure to

[1] John xv.

be barred by a knife thrust out across the path. And the whole instinct of our nature is to shrink from the knife. The sacrificial knife becomes the pruning, the grafting knife. There can be no life without that knife. Failure to obey cuts off the supply of life.

I became greatly interested in a young man whom I met in Japan. He comes of a noble, wealthy family. He attended a mission school to study English, learned to read the Bible, became intensely interested, and then decided to become a Christian. But his family was violently opposed, and pleaded earnestly with him. He would in time be the head of his family, but if he insisted now on being a Christian he would be disowned. He was to be trained in the Imperial University, and could have chosen a public national career including the probability of membership in the Imperial diet, but he remained true to his decision. And he was disowned in disgrace, cast adrift without a cent. Now he is devoting himself to mission work in the city where I met him, working among the neediest and lowest. I was told that the police gladly say that his mission has greater power than they in preserving order in that worst quarter of the city.

The night I stood by his side, speaking through his interpretation, a Japanese policeman dragged up a couple of youths who had been giving trouble, and pushed them in, saying, "Here's the place for you; now listen to that." And I have

never been in a simple service where the quiet intense power of God was more marked. This is what obedience meant to him. And this too is what abiding meant. He yielded to the grafting knife, and the life of the vine-stock came flowing freely through, bearing abundant fruit.

A few years ago I read a simple story in "The Sunday-school Times" that brought a lump in my throat. The writer told of a south-bound train stopping at a station near Washington City. At the last moment, an old negro with white hair came hurriedly forward and clambered on the last coach as the train pulled out. He was very black, and very dusty, and single occupants of seats looked apprehensive as he shuffled along looking for a seat. But he did not offer to intrude, but stood at the end of the car, looking with big wondering eyes down the car. He was evidently very tired. Then a young man offered him space in his seat, for which he seemed very grateful, and with child-like simplicity began talking.

He was going back home "to Georgy"; had been up in Virginia for years with the rare old slave loyalty serving his old master between times, while earning his own way. Now his master was dead and he was going back down to the old home state, "back to Georgy," and the words came softly, while his hand tenderly patted the seat cushion. Clearly Georgia was the acme of happiness and content for him. As the train boy came through, the young man bought

some sandwiches for the old negro. He was very grateful. Yes, he *was* hungry, and had walked several miles to get the train. He couldn't spend money for "victuals"; "money's too skase fur buying things on the road," he said, "I was 'lowin' ter fill up arter I done reach Georgy."

Then the conductor came in for tickets. The black man anxiously fumbled through one pocket after another, and finally remembered that his ticket was pinned to the lining of his hat. "Done tuk ebery cent I could scrape up to get dat ticket," he said, "but dat's all right. I kin wuk, an' fo'ks don' need money when dey's home." The conductor had passed on to the next seat behind. There sat a shabbily dressed woman, with anxious, frightened-looking face, the seat full of bundles and a pale-faced baby in arms.

"Tickets, please."

The woman's face flushed red, and then grew white and set, as she said, "I haven't any."

"Have to get off then; save me the trouble of putting you off."

The woman sprang up with terror in her big eyes, "Don't put me off; my husband's dying; the doctor said he must go South; we've sold everything left to send him; now he's dying; I must go to him. But I have no money, don't put me off. My God—my God—if you——" Her plea poured out in excited, jerky sentences. But the conductor could do nothing. He must obey his instructions, or be discharged. The woman

sank back sobbing, in the seat. The conductor turned back to get the old negro's ticket.

"I'se feared you'll have to put *me* off, boss," he said humbly, "don't expect a pore ole nigger like me to raise enuf fur a ticket." The conductor harshly ordered him off the train at the next station, saying there was some excuse for the poor woman, but none for him. The train began to slow up for the station. The old negro quietly dropped his ticket into the lap of the woman, saying, "Here's yo' ticket, missus. I do hopes yo' find dat husban' o' yourn ain' so bad as yo'se afeared." And before her dazed eyes could take in what he was doing, the old man had shuffled out of the car, and as the train pulled on he was seen quietly plodding along, still "bound for Georgy."

And there was no mention of Christ in the story, but one who knows the old typical slave class to which he belongs needs not to be told of the motive down in his heart. That's what obedience, unanalyzed, undeliberated about, meant to him. Have you ever worn the "Georgy" shoes? Have you ever tramped to "Georgy"? If some of us might find out the old man's cobbler and get some "Georgy" tramping shoes! The way of obedience is a way of sacrifice.

4. THE HILLTOPS—EXPERIENCES OF GLADNESS AND GLORY

Valley Music.

There was a third group of experiences in our Lord Jesus' life. But it will be good for us to remember that the third comes after the second. There can be no third until there has been a second. It is impossible to take first and third and omit the second. The third can come only after the second. There can be experiences of gladness and glory only to him who follows all the way. The hilltop experiences come after going down through the valley. And there is no way of reaching the hills except through the valley.

But there is a hilltop roadway of exhilarating air and outlook for him who has been through the valley. The valley is only part of the way. There are heights, too, as well as depths. And if the depths have seemed very deep, yet remember the valley depth tells how high the height is. The only way up is down. And you go as high up as you have gone down, and then a bit higher. For you started down from the level of the main road, and you go up above the level. But you go up higher than you go down. The hilltops are higher above the main road than the valley is

below. The glory comes to be more than the sacrifice.

Sacrifice is only one-half of a chapter, the first half; there is a second half, the musical half. There's a wondrous singing in the heart, even while the knife is cutting, such as only he knows who goes this way. There's a breeze from the hilltops that comes sweeping down through the trees, while you are slowly picking your way along the rough, narrow valley road. That breeze plays upon your inner strings and makes rare Æolian melody. It is the breeze of God playing upon the heart-strings of your soul. But *this* music is heard only in *this* valley road. Lovers of music say there is nothing to compare with it.

You remember the words, "who for the *joy* that was set before Him." [1] Ah, the joy! As the Master's feet slipped down into the dark shadows—the shame, the cross, the tomb—there was something else under the pain He was suffering. There was a low underchording of sweet minor music, the rhythmic swinging of His will with His Father's. And that music still sang as He slipped down quite out of sight under the cold waters of the river at the bottom of the gorge.

The Transfiguration Mount.

There were three of these glory experiences in our Lord's life, with a fourth one yet to come.

[1] Hebrews xii. 2.

Midway in the last year came *the Transfiguration Mount.* In a sore emergency, for the sake of the leaders of His little band of disciples, the inner glory of His being was allowed to shine out through His humanity. The glory of God shined out from within Him. The usual fashion of His countenance was altered by the dazzling beauty-light shining out through it.

And this too will be true of those who follow truly. As we live with our faces ever held open to Him, the glory of His face will be reflected in ours, and we shall be changed more and more into His image.[1] I have frequently told the story of the jurist who lived in our middle-west country two generations ago, a confirmed but honest sceptic, and who was converted by the *face* of a fellow townsman. The sceptic became thoroughly convinced that the thing in his neighbour's face which so attracted him was his Christian faith, and it was this that led the sceptic to accept Christ. Last year, I met out in the Orient a kinswoman of the man with the convincing face.

I remember distinctly one night, years ago, in northern Missouri, a young woman waited at the close of a meeting with her friend. We talked and prayed together and she made the great decision. I can remember looking after the two as they went out, wondering to myself how much it meant to her. I could not judge from her demeanour. But the next night they were

[1] II Corinthians iii. 18.

back again, and instantly I knew that it had meant much, everything, to her. The transfiguring peace was upon her face. I would have called her face plain the evening before. Now it was really beautiful in the sweet clear light shining out of it.

Two things stand out sharply in my memory of Ping Yang, in Korea. One is the visit to the home of a Christian family, whose head was one of those being held in prison in the famous conspiracy case. I still feel the pathos of face and voice as the dear old mother, and the gentle wife, asked so eagerly, "When will he be back?"

The other, was the faces of certain of the women in the church service there. I found myself time and again turning to look at their faces as I was speaking. There was a sweet light that transfigured their worn faces, and gave them a real beauty. It was the more striking against the background of the faces one sees in those Oriental lands.

The story has been told in various ways of the European artist sent to a Salvation Army meeting to make a caricature. He was an infidel, with a sinful life, an uneasy conscience, and a sore heart. But the faces he saw there of those redeemed out of the depths of sin, convinced him that they had what he needed, and what he afterwards got, at the same place as they, the feet of Christ. One who has looked into the faces at

some of the Salvation Army meetings has no trouble believing the story.

Now this is part of our Master's great plan for reaching His world. He comes in to us, if we let Him. He changes us as we yield to Him. The beauty of this wondrous One within shines out of face and eyes, and touches those whom we touch. His presence transfigures when He is allowed to dominate. We are changed from within. Though like Moses and Stephen we will not wist of the transfiguration, only of the Great One whose presence within it is that makes the change. We know the peace and music within; others know more of the change in face and life.

Resurrection Power—A Present Experience.

There is a second experience in this group. In sharpest contrast with Jacob's tomb stands out *the Resurrection Morning.* Our Lord Jesus rose up out of death. The strongest bars that death could make—and surely every one of us has some sore experience of their strength in holding dear ones from us—those strongest bars were snapped, as a woman breaks the cotton thread in her sewing.

Our Lord Jesus rose up again into life, and into a new, a higher, a different sort of life. The personal identity was unchanged. His disciples recognized His voice and face and form, as they talked and ate with Him. But the limitations

were gone. The control of spirit over body was complete.

And it is a bit of His gracious plan that we shall follow Him here, too. When He returns in glory there will be a resurrection for those who have followed Him. As He comes down on the clouds, the dead bodies of those who have the warm vital touch with Him, that the word "believeth" stands for, will be touched into a new life and be reunited with the spirits that had lived in them.

There will be a wondrous meeting in the air with Himself, and an equally wondrous reunion in His presence of those bound to us and to Him by ties of love. Our personal identity will be the same, loved ones instantly recognizing loved ones. But the bodies will be of a new sort, free of all the limitations and weaknesses of our earth life. And our Lord's return is peculiarly precious because it is the time of this change and reunion.

But there is yet more than this. This is something future. There is a present meaning of the resurrection-life for us, to-day, if we'll accept it, and live in the power of it. There *may* be the resurrection life and power coming into our bodies now. As the need comes, it is our privilege to look up, and ask for, and experience resurrection power coming down into our bodies, overcoming their weaknesses and diseased conditions.

The subject of healing involves much more,

for a full poised understanding of the Scripture teaching, than can be satisfactorily talked over in the brief limits here. But the great fact can be thus simply stated, that there is full healing for our bodies by God's direct touch upon them. But this means on our part living a real faith life, looking up moment by moment, receiving from His hand constantly what is needed, and using it wholly for Him. It is actually a living of the dependent life as regards the bodily needs.

Paul is clearly speaking of a present experience when he says, "If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your dying bodies by means of His Spirit that dwelleth in you." [1] But this resurrection power coming in to affect our bodily conditions is frequently in the midst of most difficult trying circumstances. It is as though a subtle hindering power were tenaciously at work, and this were being offset and overcome by the resurrection power.

It was under just such circumstances that Paul writes these words: "We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, *that the life also*—the resurrection life—*of Jesus may be manifested in our dying bodies.*" [2] This as plainly means a present experience of power in

[1] Romans viii. 11.

[2] II Corinthians iv. 11. "Dying" in these two passages does not mean being in the process of dissolution, but that the body is subject to death.

our bodies, overcoming weakness, disease, and the tendency to death.

This is the present meaning of the resurrection for us. But it is possible only for those who *will* live the resurrection life of separation and of union; separation from all that separates from the closest union of life with our Lord Jesus. And it comes oftentimes through much conflict and difficulty. This bit of the road is much contested.

The Ascension Life—Power in Possession.

When our Lord Jesus had tarried long enough to make clear to His disciples His actual bodily resurrection, He ascended to the Father's right hand, and was seated there in the place of highest honour and power. So He began living *the Ascension Life*. That means two things, it is the life of fullest power in actual possession; *and* that power is exercised through prayer,[1] His, and then—ours. Through His intercession with the Father, and through our intercession in Christ's Name, the power comes from the Father through Christ to us, and so through us.

Our Lord Jesus is eager to have us follow Him here also. Following this time means, actually using the power that has been placed at our disposal. It means receiving from His pierced hand all He has actually redeemed for us by His

[1]Ephesians i. 20, 21; Acts ii. 33; John xiv. 12, 13; Romans viii. 34; Hebrews vii. 25; ix. 24.

precious blood. There is so much that is ours by right that we do not take and use. Some do not take because they don't live where they *can* take. And some live where they can take, who yet do not take.

Since the Father thinks of us as risen with Christ and seated with Him in the place of highest power, we should seek to live up there, by His grace.[1] The ascension life for us means simply living the actual life of power that has been made possible for us, and using that power through prayer.

It helps to remember here just how much may be included in that word "prayer." One cannot be all the time on his knees, praying with his lips. And it certainly was not meant that we should be. Yet there can be prayer "without ceasing." Prayer is an *act,* the kneeling, and giving voice to the desires of our hearts. Then the act grows into a *habit,* as this becomes one of the fixed things of our daily round. And the habit full grown, becomes a *life.* All the life grows out of that bit of kneeling-time, and all the life is carried to it. The hidden springs of the life are here.

And prayer becomes *a mental attitude.* You think of everything that comes up, opportunity, difficulty, emergency, crisis, plannings,—you instinctively come to think about each thing from the standpoint of the kneeling-time. And so prayer grows to be *an atmosphere.* You live

[1] Colossians iii. 1; Ephesians ii. 6.

your life in His presence to whom you kneel. He is always present. You come to recognize His presence, which means that His presence dominates all your life. He, this One whom you go to meet at the kneeling-time, He is *always* here with you, listening to the unspoken thoughts. By and by you come instinctively to think your thoughts as in His presence. Your longings, plannings, difficulties are held open before Him. Prayer becomes the atmosphere you breathe.

And so prayer comes to be a *person*. *You* are the prayer. The Father looking down comes to recognize you, by your very attitude of heart, as a prayer, a continual, walking, living prayer, as you go quietly about your simple, homely round. And the powers of evil, too, so recognize it. And the Man at the Father's right hand recognizes in you one whom He has redeemed, and who, by His grace, would be and do and have, in actual life, all He has gotten for you.

And through that six-fold continuous prayer, by the man who yields all, and reaches out *for* all that is now his, the power of God is being continually loosened out among men, and the Father's plan being worked out. So, our Lord's ascension life at the Father's right hand, finds its echo in the ascension life being lived by His follower on the earth.

The Coming Glory.

Then comes the glorious future experience, *the Kingdom Reign and Glory.* Some day our Lord Jesus will rise up from His seat, and step again into the direct action of the affairs of earth. Soon after that day He will begin reigning over the earth as its King. The later pages of the Old Testament are all aglow with the glory of that time. He shall reign from the Mediterranean, at the centre of the earth, out to the farthest sea-coast line, and from the Euphrates east and west to the most distant ends of the earth.[1]

And those who have followed Him during these trying days of His absence, shall reign with Him over all the earth, and be sharers in His glory.[2] He will give both grace and glory.[3] Grace is the beginning of glory, and glory is the fulness of grace. It is all grace, free unmerited favour.

Now I have grouped these experiences in this way to get a clear understanding of them. But we must remember that they did not come in groups in Christ's life, and they won't in ours. The red and yellow threads, the dark and bright, are interwoven throughout the web, to make the beauty of the pattern. The minor chords come up here and there through the others, sometimes overcoming, sometimes yielding to, the joyous

[1] Psalm lxxii. 8, 9.
[2] Revelation ii. 26, 27; v. 10; xx. 4.
[3] Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

notes. The road of life runs valley and hill, valley and hill, up and down.

There were great crises in Christ's life, and there may be, there quite likely will be, crisis points in ours, but in the main the hard places intersperse with the smooth going. The weaver sitting at his loom runs in a dark shuttle-thread, and then a sharp blow of the beam puts it in place; then a bright thread and a sharp blow of the beam, and so, slowly, patiently, threads and blows follow each other till the design has been worked out.

Even so will it be in this "Follow Me" road. A glad, joyous experience may be followed by the one that is bitter and that hurts; and that again, perhaps, by something gladsome and cheery, while the daily round of life plods slowly on, day after day, week in and out, as the calendar works its steady way to the end, and then begins anew.

But all the while there's the presence of the wondrous One, unseen by outer eyes, but unmistakably real. And His presence gives peace. And there's an unfailing, guiding hand, whose grasp steadies you as you push along.

This is the road. And yonder, just ahead, is the Lone Man, whose wondrous face calls, and the reach of His pierced hand beckons. Let us take a careful look at the road, and a long look at the Man, and then——.

SHALL WE GO?

The Deeper Meaning of Friendship.

A friend in need is a friend indeed. Our Lord Jesus was our friend in our need. It was a desperate need. It could not be worse. We had been badly hurt by sin. The hurt was so bad that we could do nothing without help. Our Lord Jesus came to our help.

It was not easy for Him to be our friend. Friendship is sometimes very costly. His reputation went, and then His life. But He never flinched. He was thinking of us. Our need controlled Him. There were two controlling words in our Lord Jesus' life—passion and compassion. He had a passion for His Father. He had compassion for us. The two dovetailed perfectly. The Father had an overwhelming compassion for us. The passion for the Father in our Lord's heart included the throbbing, sobbing compassion for us. The compassion was the manward expression of the passion for the Father.

It was this compassion that controlled Him those human years. It drove Him hard along the road we've been looking at. He was driven into the Wilderness, through the years of sacri-

ficial service, out into the grove of the olive trees, up the steep hill of Calvary, down into the depths of Joseph's tomb. Step-by-step He pushed His way along, for He was thinking of His Father and of us. The passion for the Father meant a compassion for us. Things proved worse in realization as He came up close to them, as they began to touch His very life. But He never wavered. He never flinched, for He was thinking of us. He was our Friend, our Friend in our desperate need. A friend in need is a friend indeed. It was by deeds that He met our needs.

But friendship is mutual. It has two sides, its enjoyments and its obligations. That word "friendship" has two meanings. It means fellowship. Two who are congenial in thought and aim and spirit can have sweet fellowship together as they make exchange with each other of the deep things of their spirits. This is one meaning, and a sweet, hallowed meaning, too. Then there is the other. You are in some sore need. It is a desperate emergency in your life, and out of the circle of your friends one singles himself out, and comes to your aid. At real cost or sacrifice to himself perhaps, he gives you that which meets and tides over your emergency.

This is the deeper, the rarer meaning of the word, rarer both in being less frequent and in being very precious. Fellowship friends may be many; emergency friends very, very few.

And if circumstances so turn out that this man who has so rarely proven himself your friend, is himself in some emergency, and you are now in position to help him, as once he helped you, you count it not only an obligation of the highest sort, but the rarest of privileges. And with great joy you come to his help without stopping to count the cost in the doubtful, questioning way. Friendship is mutual.

Now this second, this deep, rare meaning, is the one we're using just now. It comes to include the fellowship meaning, so enriching the emergency friendship yet more. But the emphasis is on the emergency meaning of the word friendship. Our Friend was a friend in this deepest, rarest way, in the desperate emergency of our lives.

And now this Friend of ours is in need, a need so great that it is an emergency. And this seems a startling thing to say. You may think I'm indulging some rhetorical figure of speech merely. He, the Lord Jesus, in need! He is now seated at the Father's right hand in glory. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion." He is the sovereign ruler of our world. How can it be said, with any soberness of practical meaning, that He is in need, and in desperate need? Yet, let me repeat very quietly, that it is even so.

He needs our co-operation. He needs the human means through which to work out His plans. The power of God has always flowed

through human channels. And His plans *have waited,* have been delayed because He has not always been able to find men willing to let Him use them as He will. This is the only explanation of the long, weary waiting of the earth for His promised Kingdom. This, only, explains centuries of delay in the working out of His plans. The delay, the dark centuries, the misery, —these have been no part of His plan, but dead set against His plan.

"The restless millions wait the Light,
Whose coming maketh all things new.
Christ also waits; but men are slow and late.
Have we done what we could? Have I? Have you?"

Some unknown friend, on seeing the statue of General Gordon, as it stands facing the great desert and the Soudan at Khartoum, made these lines:

"The strings of camels come in single file,
Bearing their burdens o'er the desert sand:
Swiftly the boats go plying on the Nile.
The needs of men are met on every hand,
But still I wait
For the messenger of God *who cometh late.*

I see the clouds of dust rise in the plain,
The measured tread of troops falls on the ear;
The soldier comes the empire to maintain,
Bringing the pomp of war, the reign of fear,
But still I wait
The messenger of peace, *he cometh late.*

They set me brooding o'er the desert drear,
Where broodeth darkness as the deepest night.
From many a mosque there comes the call to prayer;
I hear no voice that calls on *Christ* for light.
But still I wait
For the messenger of Christ, *who cometh late.*"[1]

Following Wholly.

Our Friend is in need. The world's condition spells out the desperateness of that need. The world's need is His need. It is His world. This world is God's prodigal son. It is the passion of our Lord Jesus' heart to win His world back, and save it. That passion has been revealed most, thus far, in His going to the great extreme of dying. That passion is still unsatisfied. Yonder He sits, with scarred face and form, *expecting*.[2] Bending eagerly forward with longing eyes He is expecting. He is expectantly waiting our response, expectantly waiting the day when things will have ripened on the earth for the next step in the great plan.

And down from the throne comes the same eager cry He used when amongst us on earth, "Follow Me." This is the one call, with many variations, that runs through the seven-fold message to His followers in the book of the Revelation.[3]

[1] Anonymous, in "Egyptian Mission News," copied from S. M. Zwemer's "Unoccupied Fields of the World."

[2] Hebrews x. 12, 13.

[3] Revelation ii., iii.

But He calls for real followers. He needs Calebs, who are willing, if need be, to face a whole nation dead-bent on going the other way, and yet who never flinch but insist on following fully. Caleb's following was so unflinching, so against the current of his whole time, that it stands out with the peculiar emphasis of a six-fold mention.[1]

Those who follow "wholly" seem scarce sometimes. I was struck recently with an utterance by a man prominent in business circles and in Christian activity for years. He was speaking of how he had been active in a certain form of Christian activity, and declared that it had never occasioned him any loss, or been a detriment to him in his business. The words had a strange, suspicious sound. The Master told those who would follow fully that they might expect much loss and detriment.

The Master was very careful to give the "if's" a prominent place. "If any man would come after Me."[2] "If any man would serve Me let him follow Me."[3] Those "if's" are the cautionary signals. They mean obstacles needing to be considered before one decides. We must determine whether we will take them away or not. Half-way following, part-way following, has become very common in some of the other parts of the world, where we don't live. I'll leave

[1] Numbers xiv. 24; xxxii. 12; Deuteronomy i. 36; Joshua xiv. 8, 9, 14.
[2] Matthew xvi. 24. [3] John xii. 26.

you to judge how it is in your own neighbourhood.

I have seen people start down this "Follow Me" road with great enthusiasm and real earnestness, singing as they go. Then the road begins to narrow a bit. The thorn bushes on the side have grown so thick and rank that they push over the sides of the road, and narrow it down. You can't go along without the thorns scratching face and hands badly as you push through.

And then you suddenly find a knife, a sharp-edged knife, being held out across the road, by an unseen hand back in the bushes. The cutting edge is toward you. It is held firmly. It is clearly impossible to go on without a clash with that knife. The real meaning of that "Follow Me" is beginning to be seen now. Just ahead beyond the knife stands the Master, looking longingly, beckoning earnestly, calling still. But that knife! It takes your eyes, and the question is on in real earnest.

And it is very grievous to say that some stop there. They pitch their tents this side the knife. They may have had the courage to push through the thorns, but this knife stops them. They're not honest enough to back clear out of the road. So they hold meetings on the roadway, conferences for the deepening of the Christian life, with earnest addresses, and consecration meetings, and soft singing. And if perchance some one calls attention to the Master standing ahead there,

beyond the knife, beckoning,—well, they sing louder and pray longer so as to ease their consciences a bit, and deaden unpleasant sounds, but they make no move toward striking tents and pushing on.

And many coming up along the road are hindered. The crowds, the meetings, the singing, the earnestness,—these take hold of them and keep them from discerning that all this is an obstruction in the way. The Master's ahead yonder, past that cutting knife. In a very clear voice that rises above meetings and music, He calls, "If any man would serve Me, let him follow Me, let him get *in behind Me,* and come *up close after Me.*" He who would serve, he who would help, must not stop here, but push on to where the Master is beckoning,—yes, past the knife!

But there are big crowds at the half-way place, this side the knife. And there are still larger crowds looking on and sneering, sneering at those whose following hasn't got much beyond the singing stage. The outside crowd does love sincerity, and is very keen for the faults and flaws in those who call themselves followers.

The Tuning-Fork for the Best Music.

But some push on; they go forward; and as they reach the knife they grasp it firmly by the blade. Yes, it cuts, and cuts deep. But they push on, on after the Master. They turn the knife into a tuning-fork. Do you know about

this sort of thing? The steel in a knife can be used to make a tuning-fork. The touch of obedience brings music out of sacrifice.

This is the only tuning-fork that can give the true pitch for that sweetest music we were speaking of a little while ago. This is a bit of the power of obedience. It can change a challenging knife into an instrument of music. This is a bit of the strategy of obedience, the fine tactics of sacrifice. The tempter with the knife would hold us back. We seize his knife from his grasp. He can never use that knife again. And we use it to make sweet music to help the marching. What was meant to hold us back now helps us forward.

This is the tuning-fork the Master used. He would have us use it, too. But each one must take it himself, out of the threatening hand that would hold us back. As the call to follow comes we must go on, no matter what it involves. No circumstance, no possible loss, no sacrifice, must hold us back, for a moment, or a step, from following where our Friend calls; only so can we be His friend.

Shall we go on *all the way?* Or, shall we join the company at the half-way stopping place? Well, *it's a matter of your eyes,* how you use them. If the knife holds your eyes, you'll never get past it. That knife is like the deadly serpent's glittering eye. If the cobra's eye can get your eye, you are held fast in that awful, deadly fascination.

If you'll *lift* your eyes, to the Master's face!—ah, that's the one thing, the only thing, that can *hold* our eyes with gaze steadier than any serpent eye. The face of Christ Jesus, torn by thorns, scarred by thongs, but with the wondrous beauty light shining out, and those great patient, pleading eyes! This it was that held that young Indian aristocrat steady, while he sold all—bit by bit, of such precious things—sold all.

This it was that held steady the young Jewish aristocrat, Paul. He never forgot the light on that caravan road north, above the shining of the sun. He never could forget it. It blinded him. He "could not see for the glory of that light." Old ambitions blurred out. Old attachments faded, and then faded clear out before the blaze of that light. Family ties, inheritance, social prestige, reputation, old friendships, old honoured standards,—all faded out in the light of Jesus' face on that northern road.

How to Follow.

Shall we take a look at that face? a long look? Shall we go? Practically going means three things, a *decision,* a *habit* and a *purpose;* a thoughtful, calculating decision, a daily unbroken habit, an unalterable north-star sort of purpose.

Go alone in some quiet corner where you can think things out. Look at what it may mean for you to follow, so far as you know now. Most of it you don't know, and won't know, can't

know except as it works out in your life. Take a long, quiet, thoughtful look at the road. Then take a longer, quieter, steadier look at Him, Christ Jesus, once crucified for you, now seated in glory with all power, and asking you to-day to be a channel for His power. Then decide. Say, "Lord Jesus, I *will* follow Thee. This is my decision. By Thy help, I follow Thee, I'll follow Thee all the way." That's the first step, the decision.

As I entered the tent at Keswick one morning, a friend handed me these lines, which came to her pen at the close of a previous meeting:

"I will follow Thee, dear Master,
Though the road be rough and steep,
Thou wilt hold me lest I falter,
Thy strong hand must safely keep.

Enter in, Lord, cleanse Thy temple,
Give the grace to put away
All that hinders, all that's doubtful,
O'er my life hold blessed sway.

Use me, Master, for Thy glory,
Live out Thine own life through me,
That my life may tell the story,
And win others unto Thee.

Keep me trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,
Walking closely by Thy side,
Keep me resting, sweetly resting,
As I in Thy love abide."

Then plan your work and time so as to get a bit of time off alone every day with the Book

and with the Master. The chief thing is not to pray, though you will pray. It is not for Bible study, though that will be there too. The chief thing is to meet with the Lord Jesus Himself. He will come to you through the Book. He will fit its messages into your questions and perplexities. He Himself will come to meet with you when you so go to meet with Him. You won't always *realize* His presence, for you may sometimes be tired. But you can *recognize* His presence. You can cultivate the habit of recognizing His presence.

This is your bit of daily school-time, with the Book and the Master. It will keep your spirit sweet, your heart hot, and your judgment sane and poised. This is the second thing, the *habit*. It is the thing you cannot get along without. It must go in daily. Without it things will tangle; your heart will cool, your spirit sometimes take on an edge that isn't good, your judgment get warped and twisted, and your will grow either wabbly or stubborn. This second thing must be put in the daily round, and kept in. It helps to hold you steady to the first thing.

Then the third is the *purpose* to be true to whatever the Master tells you, to be true to Himself; never to fail *Him*. You may flinch within your feelings. You probably will. Yet you need never flinch in action. Follow the beckoning Figure just ahead in the road, regardless of thorny bush or cutting knife. Keep your spirit sweet, your tongue gentle and slow,

your touch soft and even, your purpose as inflexible as wrought steel, or as granite, as unmovable as the North Star. That's the third thing, the purpose.

And the three make the threefold cord with which to tie you fast and hard to the Lone Man ahead. He is less alone as we follow close up. The three together help you understand the meaning of *obedience.* The decision is the beginning of obedience; the habit teaches you *what* you are to obey and gives you strength to do it; the purpose is the actual obedience in daily round, the holding true to what He has told you.

Years ago, a young Jewess, of a wealthy family, that stood high in the Jewry of New York, heard the call of the despised Nazarene. It came to her with great, gentle power, and she decided that she must follow. Her father was very angry, and threatened disinheritance if she so disgraced the family. But she remained quietly, gently, inflexibly, true to her decision. At last the father planned a social occasion at the home to which large numbers were invited. And he said to his daughter, "You must sing at this reception, and make this your disavowal of the Christian faith." And she quietly said, "Father, I will sing."

The evening came, the parlours were filled, the time came for her to sing, and all listened eagerly, for they knew the beauty of her voice. With her heart in both eyes and voice, she began singing:

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be.

Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, and hoped, and known:
Yet how rich is my condition!
God and heaven are all my own."

And she passed out into the night of disinheritance on earth, "into an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This was her decision. She had seen *His face!* All else paled in its light.

Shall we go, too?

FINGER-POSTS

The Parable of the Finger-Posts.

Waiting is harder work than working. It takes more out of you. And it puts more into you, too, of fine-grained, steady strength, if you can stand the strain of it. And if, to the waiting is added perplexity, the pull upon your strength is much greater. It is harder to hold steady, and not break. And if the thing you've put your very life into seems at stake, that taxes the wearing power of your strength to the utmost.

Such a time, and just such a test, came to the little band of disciples after the resurrection, and before the ascension. The story of it is told in that added chapter of John's Gospel. You remember that last chapter is one of the added touches. The Gospel is finished with the finish of the twentieth chapter. Then John is led by the Spirit, to add something more. That added chapter becomes to us like an acted parable, the parable of the added touch. There is always the added touch, the extra touch of power, of love, of answer to prayer. Our Lord has a way of giving more. The prayer itself is answered, and then some added touch is given for full

measure. So it is in all His dealings, when He is allowed to have His own way. He is the Lord of the added touch. He does exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or think, or expect.

These disciples were now to have one of these added touches. It was a time of sore perplexity. The crucifixion had left them dazed, stupefied. It was wholly unexpected. They were utterly at sea, with neither compass, nor steering apparatus of any sort. That Saturday to them was one of the longest, dreariest, heaviest days ever spent by any one. They had all proven untrue to their dead Friend, save one.

Then as unexpectedly came the resurrection. They're dazed again, this time with joy. They haven't taken it in yet. To say that the two shocks, each so radically different from the other, shook them tremendously, is stating it very mildly. They don't know themselves. They haven't found their feet. They haven't adjusted yet to their swiftly changing surroundings. They don't know what next. They don't know what to do.

So the old impulsive Simon in Peter proposed something. Simon, the unsteady, was much in evidence those days. Peter the rock-man hadn't arrived yet. This was Simon Peter's specialty, proposing something. He said, "Well, *I*'m going fishing." And the others quickly said, "We'll go along." The mere doing something would be a relief. But they caught nothing. It

was a poor night. The morning brought only heavy hearts with light nets and boats. They had failed at following; now they were failing even at their old specialty, fishing. Couldn't they do *any*thing?

In the dim light of the breaking dawn there's some One standing on the beach, a Stranger. He seems interested in them, and calls out familiarily, "Have you caught anything?" And you feel the heaviness of their hearts over something else in the shout "No." And the gentle voice calls out, with a certain tone of quiet authority in it, "Throw over on the right there, and you'll get some fish." And they cast the nets out again, feeling a strong impulse to obey this kindly Stranger, without stopping to think out why.

And at once the ropes pull so hard that it takes all their strength to hold them. It's John's quick insight that recognizes the Stranger. With his heart in his throat, in awe-touched voice, he quietly says, "It's the Lord." That's enough for Peter. He takes the shortest way to shore. He has some things to talk over with the Master. And as the seven tired men landed the fish, they found breakfast waiting on the sands. Who built that fire? Who cooked that fish? Who was thinking about them and caring for their personal needs, when they were so tired and hungry? And when breakfast was finished, there's the quiet talk together, about love and service, while the sun is climbing up in the east.

It is addressed to Peter, but it is meant, too, for those who were so fleet-footed a few nights before.

All this was the answer to their perplexity. They were willing and waiting to follow, but they had failed so badly. They were not quite sure where they stood. They had no finger-posts. Now the finger-posts were put up to show the way. This fishing scene was an acted parable, the Parable of the Finger-posts.

The Lineage of Service.

Look at these finger-posts a little. There was the Lord Jesus. They didn't recognize Him. But He was there. He had a plan. He took authoritative command of their movements. He gave directions. They obeyed Him. Then came the great haul of fish. Then came the quiet talk about love and service, but with the emphasis on love.

The love was the chief thing. The service was something growing out of love. "Lovest thou Me?" Then thou mayest serve, thou hast the chiefest qualification. Our Lord gave them the lineage of service that morning. These are the generations of true service. A sight of Jesus begets love, a tender, gentle, strong, passionate thing of rarest beauty that is immortal, but must have the constant sight of its father's face for vigorous life. And love at once begets obedience, which grows strong and stout and skilled,

as long as it stays in its father's presence. And obedience begets service, untiring, glad, patient service.

There are some outsiders that have come into this family, but they do not have the fine traits of blood-kin. "Duty" is one of these. It serves because it must. And at times it renders fine, high service. But its service comes out of the will, rather than out of the heart. It is ruled more by a sense of propriety, never by a passion of the heart.

"Privilege" is near of kin to duty, and it is a high-born, fine-grained thing. It serves because it is an honour to do so. It is enjoyable to be so highly connected. But it constantly needs proper recognition and appreciation of its work and skill. But these are really outsiders. They have married in, and do not have the real family traits. The one word, and the only one, that may properly be used for true service is that fine word, "passion." True service is a thing of love, a thing of the heart, a flame that pervades and permeates and envelops the whole life within and without, a fire that consumes and controls.

The Lord Jesus, His presence, His plan, His authoritative leadership, their obedience, love thrice asked and given, service because of love, —these are the finger-posts for these perplexed men. They can be put into very simple shape for our guidance. Three finger-posts hung up will include all of them,—*clear vision, a spirit*

of obedience, a heart of tender love. These are the three great essentials of all true, full following. And there will not be, there cannot be, true full following without all three of these. There may be much earnest, honest service, much faithful plodding, and hard work, and much good done. But there's always less than the best. There is less than should be. The best results are not being got for the effort expended, except where these three are blended.

A clear vision means simply a clear understanding of things as they are, and of what needs to be done, with all the facts in that belong in. A spirit of obedience means not only an obedience in spirit, a spirited obedience, but an obedience that fits into the spirit of the Leader and His plans. And through these as a fine fragrance breathes a heart of tender undiscourageable love.

Not Quite In Is Outside.

These three things must be kept in poise. So the Master plans. This is the parable of the fishing. There are many illustrations of one only of these, or two, in action. And the bad or poor result that works out can be plainly seen. The Holy Spirit with great plainness and faithfulness has hung up cautionary signs along the road.

There may be *clear vision without obedience.* That is, a clear understanding of the Master's

plan, but a failure to fit in. That will mean a dimming vision. And if persisted in, it will mean spiritual disaster. The great illustration of this is Judas. Judas had as clear a vision, in all likelihood, as the others when he was chosen for discipleship, and later for apostleship. There was the possibility of a John in Judas, even as there was the possibility of a Judas in John. Both are in every man. But Judas was not true to the vision he had. He wanted to use the Master to further his own plans and advantage. And the vision slowly blurred and dimmed, as the under nature was given the upper hand. The Master's clear insight recognized the demon spirit that Judas had allowed to come in, though Judas did not.[1] Then came the dastardly act of betrayal. And Judas has been held up to universal scorn and condemnation.

But Judas isn't so lonely, if you think into the thing a bit. He only put personal advantage above loyalty to the Lord Jesus. He simply preferred his own plans to the Master's plans. That was all. And he tried to force his own through, without suspecting how the thing would turn out, and how tremendously much was involved. The great events being worked out have thrown his contemptible act into the limelight of history. But the act itself wasn't uncommon. Possibly you may know some one living quite near, with some of this same sort of trait.

One of the saddest things in the record of

[1] John vi. 70.

Christian leadership is just this, clear vision with a gradually lessening obedience, then a gradually dimming vision, and that decrease of both increasing, as the slant down increases. The old-time motions in public ministering continue, more or less mechanically, but the power has long since passed away. And sadder yet, like the strong man of old, these shorn men wist it not. One's lips refuse to repeat the word "Judas" of them, even in the inner thoughts. Yet these class themselves under the same description,—clear vision without full obedience to it; personal plans and preferences put above loyalty to the Master.

A second illustration is that of King Saul. Clear vision, failure to obey, forcing himself to wrong action to keep his popularity, rebellion, stubbornness,—these are the simple successive steps in his story. And the black night falls upon the utter spiritual disaster of his career, as he lies prone on the earth before the witch.

These two characters become formulas; they need only to be filled in with other names to make accurate modern biography of some.

There may be *clear vision with make-believe* or *partial obedience*. It hurts to speak of such a thing. The word "hypocrisy" is a very hard one to get out at the lips. It should never be used except to help, and then very, very sparingly, and only in humblest spirit, and with earnest, secret prayer. Ananias and Sapphira quickly come to mind here. They wanted *men*

to think them wholly surrendered, though they knew they were not. That was all; not so unusual a thing, after all. There are sore temptations here for many. The swiftness of the punishment that came does not mean that their wrong was worse than that of others who do the same thing. That modern religious lying of this sort is not as quickly judged merely tells the marvellous *patience* of God.

There may be *clear vision and obedience without love.* This means a hard, cold, stern righteousness. It is truth without grace. Nothing can be made to seem more repulsive. One incident in Elijah's career furnishes the illustration here. Let us say such a thing *very softly* of such a mighty man of God, and say it in fewest words, and only to help. He was a man of marvellous faith, and prayer, and bold daring, in the midst of a very crooked and perverse generation. Israel was at its very lowest moral ebb thus far.

Elijah had a clear understanding of what should be done to check the awful impurity which was sweeping over the nation like a flood-tide. He was true to his conviction in sending the four hundred priests of horribly licentious worship to their death. But was he broken-hearted over them? Was he utterly broken down with grief as he led them to the little running brook of Kishon for the nation's sake? God touched the sore spot, when, down at Horeb, the mount of thunder and fire, He spoke to this man of fire and thunder in that exquisitely soft

sound of gentle stillness. This was a new revelation of God to this stern prophet of righteousness.

There may be a sort of letter-obedience, a formal obedience to the vision you have. In one's own estimation, there may seem to be a knowledge of what is right, and a self-satisfied doing of it. There may be a painstaking attention to the forms of obedience, and a self-righteous content in doing the required things. Is this the underlying thought in Peter's self-complacent remark, "Lo, *we* have left all and followed Thee.[1] We're so much better than this rich young ruler who couldn't stand the test you put to him. *We*——"? Poor, self-confident Peter! When the fire test did come, and come so hot, how his "we" did crumble!

"*Light Obeyed Increaseth Light.*"

There may be *obedience without clear vision.* That is, there may be a doing of what is thought to be right, but without a clear understanding of what is the right thing to do. This results in *fanaticism.* Moses killing the Egyptian and hiding his body in the sand had no clear vision of God's plan. He knew something was wrong, and that something needed to be done. And so he proposed doing something. And the poor Egyptian who happened in his way that day felt the weight of his zeal. It's a not uncommon

[1] Matthew xix. 27.

way of attempting to righten wrongs. He forgot that there is a God, and a plan, and that he who does not work into the plan of God is hitting wrong. There has been a lot of wreckage scattered along this beach.

Saul persecuting the Christians is another illustration here. He is a sad, striking example of conscientiousness without sufficient knowledge, of earnestness without clear light. He was conscientiously doing the wrong thing, as earnestly as he could, supposing it to be the right thing. John wanted to call down fire from heaven and burn up some people that didn't fit in with their plans.[1] Earnest intensity without sufficient light has kindled a good many fires of this sort.

Sometimes this does not go as far as hurtful fanaticism, but leads to blundering and confusion and delay. Abraham was acting without clear light when he yielded to Sarah's plan of compromise for getting an heir.[2] A bit of quiet holding of her suggestion before God for light would have cleared his mind. The result was wholly bad,—a confusion in his own mind, a mental cloudiness about God's plan and promise, an element of discord introduced in the tribal life, and a delay of many years, apparently, before the conditions were ripe for the coming of the heir of faith, on God's own plan.

Peter eating with his Gentile Christian brothers, and then refusing to eat with them, when some Jewish Christians came down from Jerusa-

[1]Luke ix. 51-54. [2]Genesis xvi.

lem, made very bitter feeling in the Church at Antioch, for a time.[1] Paul's clearer light helped. Time spent in waiting for clearer light is always time wisely spent, even though we may seem slow.

There may be *love without clear vision.* The love makes intense desire to do something, but with no clear idea of what would best be done. Peter's awkward sword-thrust was an attempt to help, because of real love in his heart for his Master, now in personal danger. The Master's quiet healing touch recognized the love, and also rebuked and corrected the hasty, ill-advised action. But there's worse yet here, mean contemptible cowardice. Peter actually denying his relation with his Friend and Master, and making his denial seem more natural by the addition of the oaths that the maid well knew no follower of this Jesus could have uttered—what mean contemptible cowardice! But go gently there in using such hard words. He was only afraid of being hurt. He merely wanted to save himself. That isn't such an uncommon thing. Haven't you sometimes known something of this sort—*among others?*

The cowardly nine, making a new record for fleet-footedness, down the road, in the dark, were only doing the same thing in more cowardly, less-spirited fashion. These men loved Jesus. No one may doubt that. But there was no clear understanding of that night's doings,

[1] Galatians ii. 11-14.

though the Master had faithfully and plainly tried to tell them. Fear for their own safety overcame the real love in their hearts for the Man they forsook that dark night.

Clear vision and love without obedience is—impossible! Where there is no obedience, or faulty obedience, either the vision has blurred or dimmed, or the love is burning low.

Clear vision and loving obedience mean power, sweet, gentle, fragrant, helpful power. It means a grateful crowd, and a pleased Master, who has been able once again to reach the crowd.

Clear vision and love as a passion, an intense passion, means irresistible power. That is to say it means a perfect human medium through which our Lord Jesus can act and manifest Himself. And this is the real meaning of power, power to the full,—Jesus Christ in free action. John, the fisherman, had a gradually but steadily clearing vision. He did not understand fully. But he understood enough to know that there was more to come which would clear things up. He could follow where He did not understand. His love for the Man controlled, while his understanding was clearing. He went in "*with* Jesus" that awful night. I imagine he never left His side. Can we ever be grateful enough that at least one of us was true that night!

There was the same danger as with the others, and it was made more acute by His simple, open stand at his Friend's side. But love, with at least some understanding, held him steady. He could

understand that Jesus must be doing the right thing, even though he could not understand the run of events that centred about Jesus.

The intensity that would call down fire, changed, under the influence of the changing, clearing vision, into an intensity of love. It was a mellower, gentler, evener, but not less intense flame. The disciple whom Jesus loved became the disciple of love. Love and vision worked upon each other from earliest times with him. Love made the vision clearer, the clearing vision made the love stronger, till they worked together into a perfect blend.

Paul's unmistakable vision on the Damascus road brought a passion of love, and an answering obedience, that swept him like a great flame. The fire-marks of that flame could be found all over the Roman Empire. He made mistakes doubtless, but these but made the trend of his whole life stand out the more. Paul was a wonderful combination of brain and heart and will, held in remarkable poise. The finest classic on love is from his pen. John could love. Paul could love, and could tell about love.

But a peculiar tenderness comes into one's heart as we remember that there was just one Man who held these three in perfect poise. And let us not forget that though He was more than man, yet it was a *man*, one of ourselves, who so held these three in such fine balance. It was a human poise, even as planned by the Father for the human life. The clear vision early began

coming to Him,[1] and it became clearer and fuller and unmistakable until it had had its fulfilment. Obedience was the touchstone of all His life, from Nazareth to Olivet. And who, like Him, had the heart of tender love, the heart that was ever moved with compassion at sight of need, the heart that broke at the last under the sore grief of its burden of love?

The Olivet Vision.

Shall we take a moment more to look at these three finger-posts a little more closely? Just what is meant by *a clear vision?* I could say at once that it means a vision of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet that language has sometimes been used in a vague sort of way. And some of us have taken it in a vague indefinite way, and not thought into its practical meaning. Clear vision here means an understanding of who Christ Jesus is, and what He is, and what plans He has. Then it means that that understanding is so clear that it becomes intense, intense to the point of being overwhelming. That is, it becomes the *dominant* thing that controls your thinking, and affections, and actions,—your life.

I think I may say correctly that the place for getting such a clear, full vision of Christ Jesus is *Olivet.* Olivet is a good place to pitch your tent for a little while, until your vision clears. Then you'll not stay there, though you may return to

[1] Luke ii. 49.

keep the lines of your vision clear and clean; you will be down in the valleys with the crowds.

One day the Master led His disciples out to the Mount of Olives. It was the last time they were together. And the group of men stand there talking, the eleven grouped about the One. He is talking with them quietly and earnestly. Then, to their utter amazement, His feet are off the ground, He is rising upward in the air, then higher, and higher, until a bit of cloud moves across, and they see Him no more. This is all you would see at a distance.

But let us come a bit nearer, and stand *with* them, and listen, and watch. Olivet is the last bit of earth to feel the presence of the Master's feet. Off yonder to the west, down in the valley, you see a clump of trees; that is Gethsemane, the place of the bloody sweat and the tense agony of spirit. Across the valley, still looking west, lies the city, outside whose wall is the little knoll called Calvary, where Jesus gave His life out. Over here to the east and south lies little Bethany, which speaks of His resurrection power. And a bit farther off are the bare wilds sloping down,—that is the place of the sore temptation. Far away to the north, up in the clouds, lies *the* snow-clad mountain, beyond your outer vision, yet coming now to your inner vision, where the God within shined out through the Man.

But while a quick glance takes all this in, your eyes are caught and held by the Man in the

midst. His presence embodies and intensifies all that these places suggest. His face bears the impress of the Wilderness, and of the Garden. The scars plainly there tell of Calvary, as no piece of geography ever can. His mere presence tells unmistakably of the resurrection. And you know who He is, and what. He made the world and breathed His breath of life into man's nostrils. Later He came in amongst us as one of ourselves. He was tempted like as we, suffered like as we never suffered, gave His life for us, went down into death, *rose* up again out of death. This is the Jesus of Olivet.

But the action of His face and pose are part of the sight. His eyes are looking *outward*. The set of His face is out. His hands point out. And He is talking; listen: He is talking about a "*world*." And the outward turn of face and eyes and pointing hand become the emphasis of that word, "*world*." He died for a world. He is thinking about a world. He has a plan of action for a world.

But another word gets your ear—"*ye*." He is thinking about these disciples, about His followers. He has a plan of action for them. And these two plans, for the world, for their lives, these two are tied up together. And a third word stands out—"*I*." "I am with you, I am in command." And now three things stand out together, a world-plan, a plan for the follower's life fitting into the world-plan, and in the midst—Jesus, the Christ, my Saviour, my Lord.

This is the Olivet vision. This, the clear, full vision: of Jesus, crucified, risen, empowered; of His world-plan; of His plan for my life as part of the world-plan.

Olivet faces four ways. Backward, it points to the sympathy, the humanness, the suffering, the cross, of Jesus. Upward, it looks to Himself, now sitting above the clouds at the Father's right hand, "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named," with "all things in subjection under His feet." Outward, it reaches to the world He died for, and plans for, and is still brooding over with more than a mother's love. Forward, it anticipates eagerly the time when He will come back to finish up what He began, and we are to continue. When He returns it will be to this same Olivet.[1] He picks up the line of action exactly where He left it. Olivet is to know a second pressure of those feet.

This is the clear, full vision, the three-fold vision we need and must have for true following: Himself, His world-plan, His plan for each one's life. This means seeing things as they are. They fall into true perspective. You see how disproportioned and grotesque the common perspective of earth is. You see things through His eyes. His eyes take out of yours the personal colouring, the colour blindness of personal interest and advantage which so strangely and strongly affect all our sight.

[1]Zechariah xiv. 4.

We need frequent visits to Olivet's top, until constant looking at its outlooking landscape, at Himself, fills and floods our eyes. We need the quiet time alone with Himself and His Word, and some map-picture of His world, as a habit, until these, Himself, and His word, and His world, are burned into eyes and heart, until they fire as a sweet fever the whole life.

The Spirit of Obedience.

Out of the vision comes the *spirit of obedience*. We have spoken of the act of obedience, and the habit of obedience, but deeper down is the spirit of obedience, which lies under act and habit. I have used the words, "spirit of obedience," rather than simply the word, "obedience," because obedience sometimes stands for a bondage to rules, a slavery to things. The obedience itself must be deeper than rule or outward thing. The spirit of obedience sees into the spirit of the rule, and through the outward thing, and floods it with a new spirit of life. This spirit of obedience is the one finger-post found oftenest along this road. So only can we be true to the vision. And obedience itself is not true obedience, nor true to the vision, save as it is a love-obedience. Real obedience breathes in the spirit of the One being obeyed. It breathes out the love-spirit of him who obeys.

The touchstone of the "Follow Me" life is not need, nor service, nor sacrifice. The need

is felt to the paining point. The service is given joyously to the limit of strength. The sacrifice is yielded to to the bleeding point. But these all come as they come, *through and out of obedience*. Yet need *is* the controlling thing, too, *but* not the need as *we* see it, but as *He* sees it, who sees all, and feels most deeply. The need is best met, the service best given, the sacrifice most healing in its power, as each grows out of obedience.

The standard of obedience is three-fold, the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and one's own judgment and spirit-insight. These three are meant to fit together. This is the natural result when things are, even measurably, as they should be. When God is allowed to sway the life as He wishes, these three fit and blend perfectly. The Word of God taken alone will lead to superstitious regard for a book and to a cramped judgment and action. To say that we are guided by the Spirit, without due regard for the Book He has been the principal one in writing, leads to fanaticism, or at least to ill-advised, unbalanced, unnatural opinions and action.

Naturally one's own judgment and spirit-insight play a large part, for they make the personal decision, they interpret both Word and Spirit to us. It is through one's judgment and spirit-insight that the Holy Spirit and the Word influence the decision and action. The great essential is the habitual, quiet, broad, thoughtful study of God's Word, with the will and life utterly yielded to the Holy Spirit. So

one's spirit is trained to understand, and one's judgment to form its conclusions. The Holy Spirit makes us understand God's purpose as revealed in His Word, and fits this into the need of practical life. Obedience, intelligent and full, depends upon the quiet time alone with God over His Word.

I want to add something more here. It is something startling. *There are no break-downs in the path of obedience.* I say that very softly, as a guilty sinner in the matter of break-downs. I remember that the record of Christian service is like one continuous record of break-downs, broken bodies, wrecked nerves, sometimes wrecked minds. And I am not saying it to criticize any one, except it be myself. Out of a long personal experience of constant going, unwise overwork, and serious break-downs, I am but confessing my own sins, when I say there are no break-downs in the path of obedience. Does that mean that there is much earnest service that we have not been told to do? And the answer must be a very gentle, but very clear, "Yes."

But the Man in command has perfect knowledge of what you can do. And *He never asks you to do anything beyond your strength.* Or, if He does need you to meet some emergency beyond your strength, He gives the strength required. He sends in a fresh supply of resurrection life to repair the waste of your body, and then, too, He calls into use strength, resources, talents, that you have not known you had. Now

I know that if this be taken seriously, it will lead some to a heart-searching time alone with the Master. I am sure that if obedience alone is to be the key-note, it will mean many a readjustment. And it will mean, too, a new flood stream of power flowing through and out as the connecting parts are re-adjusted.

There's a helpful literal reading of a verse in Hebrews.[1] "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, with the blood of an eternal covenant, *put you in joint* [*with Himself*] to do *His* will in every good work, working in you [or through you] that which is well-pleasing in His sight." Obedience puts us in joint with Him, if we are out. It keeps us in joint; then the power flows from Him, through that joint, out where our life touches.

Obedience is really a music word. It is the rhythmic swinging together of two wills, His and ours. Rhythm of action is power. Rhythm of colour is beauty. Rhythm of sound is music. But it's really all music. For power is music of action. Beauty is music to the eye. Rhythmic sound is music to the ear and heart. If there might be more of this music, He and we in perfect accord, how the crowds would be caught by its melody and come eagerly to listen.

[1]Hebrews xiii. 20, 21.

The Heart of Love.

And out of the vision comes the heart of love. The sight of the Lord Jesus' face begets love; and love begets obedience. But obedience never can keep true away from its father. It is never true full obedience except it have the throbbing heart of love in it. This is the unfailing mark. It's so easy to fail here. Yet "love never faileth." The classical Thirteenth of First Corinthians becomes an indictment. We know it better in the Book than in life. "Love suffereth long, . . . *envieth* not . . . is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unbecomingly or inconsistently, seeketh not even its own, is not provoked." Love "beareth" with "all things" in the one loved, which it would gladly have different, "believeth all" possibly good "things" of him, "hopeth" for "all" desirable "things" in him, "endureth all things" in him that hurt and pain. "Love *never* faileth." In conversation one day with an unusually earnest worker in the Orient, we were talking of these things. His work was beset by many sore perplexities. "Ah," he said, "there is where I have failed. I have not had the heart of love." And I thought how many of us could say the same thing.

There are in the Bible three great illustrations of the heart of love. As Moses came down from the presence of God, and found the people dancing about the golden calf, he was hotly indignant. But as he goes back to plead with God, the great-

ness of his love and grief comes out. In God's presence their sin is seen to be so much greater. He cries, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if Thou wilt forgive their sin——" And a great sob breaks the sentence abruptly off, and it is never finished. The possibility seems to come to his mind, in this holy presence, that such sin, by these so greatly blest, could not be forgiven. And that seems to him unbearable. "And if not," if it cannot be forgiven, "*blot me,* I pray Thee, *out of Thy Book;* but don't blot them out." [1]

In the beginning of the great Jew section of Romans, Paul is speaking of the intense pain of heart he had over the unbelief and stubbornness of his racial kinsfolk. He says, "I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish *that I myself were accursed* from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen," that so they might not be accursed.[2] Yet neither Moses nor Paul could so sacrifice himself for another's sin. "No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." [3] But Jesus, the pure, sinless one, *was* blotted out. He *was* made a curse. Moses and Paul would if they could. Jesus both could and did. Was there ever such a heart of love! And that heart was greatest in its action of love when it broke.

[1] Exodus xxxii. 31, 32.
[2] Romans ix. 1-3.
[3] Psalm xlix. 7.

A simple story has come to me, I cannot remember where, of a woman in southern China in the province of Kwangtung. She had a serious illness and was taken to a mission hospital in Canton for treatment. There for the first time she heard of Christ, of His love and death. And that story coming so new and fresh transformed her, as she opened her heart to the Saviour. And a great peace came into her heart, and showed plainly in her face. Then her thought began turning to her own village. Not a soul there knew of this wondrous Saviour. If they but knew. But what could she do, her illness was very serious.

The next time the physician came by she asked him how long she would live if she stayed there. He said that he did not know, but he thought about six months. And how long if she left the hospital and returned home. He didn't know; maybe three months. And after he had gone she quietly announced that she was going home. And those about her were greatly astonished. "Why," they said, "you'll lose half your life!" And the tears came into her eyes, as a gentle smile overspread her poor worn face, and she simply said, "Jesus gave His whole life for me; don't you think I'm glad to give half mine for Him?" I don't know how long she lived. The story didn't say, but it did tell that most of the people in her village knew a long life, even an everlasting life, because of her simple telling of the Gospel story.

There were the three essentials, though never so thought of or analyzed by her. She had the vision of Jesus Christ her Saviour, then of those who had never heard of Him, and then of her own part in the plan of telling them. The impulse to tell them was obeyed gladly. And the heart of love counted not her life dear unto herself if only others might be told of this wondrous Christ Jesus.

FELLOW-FOLLOWERS

God's Problem.

God needs men. That is the tremendous fact that stands out in every generation. There never has been a corner since Adam walked out of Eden where that need was not thrust into some man's face, and thrust into God's face. It is being thrust into our faces to-day as ever before, and as never before. For the ends of the earth are come upon us, for the helping touch of our hands, *or* for the drag-back to be overcome by some one's else helping touch.

God is a needy God. That fact is spelled out by every page of this old Book of His. And it is spelling itself out anew by the book of the life of the race whose current chapter is being written by our generation. God's wonderful plan for man lies at the root of His need. In His great graciousness He made us in His own image. That is, He gave to us the right of full free choice. He has never infringed upon that image, that right of choice, by so much as a whispered breath or the moving of a hair. He gave man the sovereignty of the earth and its life. And every move God has made among men on earth has been through a man, and through his free consent.

The tragedy of sin has intensified God's need tremendously. It has intensified everything, man's misunderstanding and hatred of God, the love of God's heart for man, and the distance between the two. It is constantly intensifying pain, sorrow, man's need, and the blight upon nature. It increases God's difficulty in working out His will of love for man. For it makes it increasingly hard to get even Christian men to see things through God's eyes, and gladly give themselves up to His purposes.

Poor God! Such a needy God! Rich in power, in character, in the loving worship of the upper world, in His love for all, rich beyond power of human calculation; so poor in the response of men to the wooing of His heart. So poor in the glad, intelligent co-operation of those who trust Him for salvation in the next world, but are content with very little of it in this. So needy in the lack of those who bring love and life, intellect and wealth, and lay all at His feet.

This has been God's problem, to respect the rights He has given man, and yet work through him in carrying out His great plan of love. This is the warp into which the whole of the Bible fabric is woven—the tragedy of sin, of sin-hurt, sin-stubborned men, the patience of God in wooing men back, and His exquisite tact and unlimited patience is always working *through* men's consent, and through human channels.

To-day He comes to you and me, pleadingly

asking us to help Him in His passionate plan for His race. Some few have the gift of leadership. Most of us are moulded to follow. He needs both leader and follower. He needs the *life*. He needs the *love*. Through these, whether in prominent place or shadowed, in leadership or in following along some well-beaten path, through these—the *life*, the *love*, He works in His great simple plan for overcoming the tragedy of sin. That plan includes the whole race. God has no favourites among the nations. When the hour is ripe for an advance step, a man is found ripened for leadership. This is the real final explanation of certain great leaders. It was not the man himself alone, but the coming together of the time, the man, and the plan; the time for an advance step, the man who had yielded to God up to the ripening point, the plan of God. And the decisive thing was the plan of God.

President Finney used to insist very earnestly that revivals followed a fixed law of action. When men would with all their hearts fit into the great laws of grace, there would follow the gracious revival results even as effect follows cause in nature; and without question he was wholly right. In addition to this, however, there is a further fact to note, of which Finney himself was a striking illustration. In God's broader plans for the race when the time is ripe for an advance step, He has some man in training for leadership in that hour, and so ripeness of time

and of man and of plan come together. But the chief factor at work is God Himself.

This, and only this, explains fully certain great religious movements and leaders. Such men in later centuries as Luther in Germany, Zwingli in Switzerland, Calvin in France and Switzerland, Wesley and Whitefield in England, and Finney in both America and England. Only this can satisfactorily explain Moody's unusual career. He was a man of strong native parts, of marked individuality, and of utter surrender to God. And this combination would have brought great results under any circumstances, but it does not explain the great movement in which he was the leader. It was God's hour for an advance movement, the man so untrained in men's schools, was slowly made ready in God's school, and man and hour and plan fitted together. But the chief emphasis remains on the fact that it was the time in God's gracious plan for an advance. And the nations of the earth have been feeling the blessed impulse of that advance ever since.

But the leaders are few; and what could they do without the great mass of followers? God needs the faithful ones, unknown by name, hidden away in quiet corners, each the centre of a group which is touching a larger group, and so on, ever widening. Everything turns on this,—letting God have the full use of us; living as though God were the realest thing in this matter-of-fact, every-day world; going on the supposi-

tion that the Bible is indeed His Word, and is a workable book for daily problems and needs, the one workable book; making everything bend toward getting His will done. When we get up into His presence, this will be found to have been the one thing worth while. When the race story has been all told, the biography of earth brought to its last page, this will be the one thing that will stand out, and remain, that we let Him use us just as He would, and that we have brought everything at our disposal to bear on doing His will of love.

He comes to you and me afresh to-day with His old-time winsome patience, asking the use of us. He always thinks of us in two ways, for our own sakes and for our help in reaching the others. Followers are messengers. Some are special messengers in speech. But all are messengers in their lives; that is, they are meant to be. This is our Lord's plan. He wants us to *live* the message.

That old word "witness" has grown to mean three things, that you *know* something, that you *tell* it, and that you tell it *with your life*. Every time the word witness is used in the New Testament it stands for some form of the word underneath from which our English word "martyr" comes. We have come to associate that word "martyr" with the idea of giving one's life in a violent way for the truth believed. This is the meaning that has grown into the word. But the practical meaning of this martyr-witness

word goes a bit deeper yet than this. It is not merely giving the life out in the crisis of dying, but that the whole life is being given out in a continual martyrdom, that is, a continual witnessing. These words, follower, messenger, witness, run together. In following we are witnesses. We know something about this Man who goes before, a blessed something that has entered into the marrow and joints of one's being. We tell it. We tell it chiefly by living it. We are messengers. The whole life is a message of what Christ Jesus has done for us, and is to us.

A Confession of Faith in Wood and Nails.

Now, this is the thing—this *living it*—that God has always counted on most. There are in the Bible most striking illustrations of lived or *acted messages.* One man actually preached a sermon nearly fifteen months long merely by the position of his body. You would call that a long sermon, but it had the desired result, at least partly. The man got the ears of the people. They were hardened sermon listeners. The talked sermons had no effect. So they were given an acted sermon.

I think it may help to look at a few of the old-time followers. The one chief thing that marked these men was that they *lived the messages.* They experienced the truth they stood for, sometimes to the extent of much suffering. This *experience* became part of the man's life. And this

it was that God used as His message. You cannot be a follower fully without the thing taking your very life, and taking it to the feeling, deep-feeling, point.

One of the earliest of these followers was *Enoch.* His brief story is like the first crocus of spring coming up through the cold snow, like a pretty flower growing up out of the thin crack of earth between great stones. There was such a contrast with the surroundings. It is in the Fifth of Genesis, one of the most tiresome chapters in the whole Bible. Its tiresome monotony is an evidence of its inspiration; for it is a picture of life with God left out. There are five chapters in Enoch's biography. He was born; with that he had nothing to do. Like his lineal descendants and his neighbours he just *"lived"* for a while, went through the usual physical and mental and social motions of life, no more. Then a babe came into his household, a fresh act of God, a fresh call of God, one of God's loudest calls. This was the turning point. He must have heard and answered that call, for a new life began. He "walked with God." This became his chief trait. It stands in contrast with his former life. Before he merely *lived;* now he was on a higher plane, he *walked with God.* The final chapter,—"God took him." They two had a long walk one day along the hilltops—or was it only a short walk?—and Enoch never came back. God kept him.

Now, in all this Enoch was God's messenger

to the whole race. Jude speaks of his prophesying or preaching. But the emphasis of this simple Genesis biography is not on his preaching but on himself. That man walking about in his simple daily touch of heart with God,—that was the message. It wasn't an easy thing to do. The whole set of his time was against it. It was an evil time; impurity and violence were its outstanding traits. Enoch's life cut straight across the grain of his time. He was the leader of the first racial family, the chief one in the direct line from Adam. And he insisted on living habitually a simple, holy, pure life, walking with God, never out of touch. *Following meant keeping in step with God, never missing step.*

And this was talked about. Every one knew it. He was doubtless felt to be out of touch with his time. And he was, blessedly out of touch. It was probably never harder to walk with God. But he did it. This is how he helped God. This is what he was asked to do. God was speaking to the whole race through this great man's simple habit of life. And He spoke still louder when, one day, He took him away. Enoch's absence was the talk of the race. "He was not *found*." Clearly they looked for him, looked everywhere and discussed him and his peculiar manner of life, his strange disappearance, and his freedom from death.

So he met God's need. He became God's medium of communication to the entire race, simply in what he was, and so it is that most of us may

help God. And if we will, He will be less needy, for He will speak through our lives to all whom we touch. Following means walking with God. So we help God in His need.

And Enoch helped God to get *Noah.* The touch of Enoch is on his great-grandson. Grace *is* hereditary, when there's enough of it. Enoch had the boldness to set a new standard. It was easier for Noah to reach up toward it, when it was already set. Now, Noah was asked to do something more. Enoch walked with God, the personal life was the one thing. Noah walked with God, *and* did something more.

He was asked to believe something unusual. It was something that could be believed only by accepting God's word against every other circumstance and probability; that is, that a flood was coming to cover the whole earth, and destroy the race. And he was asked further to put his belief into the shape of an immense house-boat probably built where it wouldn't float except such a flood did come. That huge boat was his confession of faith. He acted his faith. It would be a costly thing, perhaps taking all Noah's wealth, and taking some years to build. That belief was about the unlikeliest thing imaginable from every natural standpoint, *with God left out.* And God is *practically* left out, except as a very last questionable consideration, then, and ever since, and to-day. Probably Noah was the butt of gossip and ridicule, quite possibly of scandal and reproach, year after year, by the whole race;

and he would feel it, and feel it for his family's sake. That boat and its dreaming builder were the standing joke of the time. He was regarded as a fool, a fanatic, a poor, unbalanced enthusiast, building his gigantic boat on dry land! Perhaps some regretted that he brought the cause of religion into reproach by being such an extremist.

Yet the only thing he did was to believe God's word, and to shape his conduct accordingly. He simply did as God asked. He heard God correctly. His ears were trained to hear. He did what God wanted, regardless of what people thought. That was how he helped God in His need. The race was saved through this fresh start, else it had burned out long ago. Following meant a true life lived, *and faith in God expressed in wood and nails, and in good money paid out,* while men met him coldly on the road, or jeered.

Befriending God.

Long years afterward there was another man who helped God so decidedly that he became known as "the friend of God." And the word "friend" is used this time in the emergency sense. He did the thing God asked him to do, and this helped God in a plan He was working out for the whole race. God had to have a man. Abraham was willing to be the man. And in that he became God's helpful friend. The thing

God asked him to do seems very simple, and yet it was a radical thing for this man to do. He was to leave his father's family, and all his kinsfolk, and live *a separated life,* both from them and from all others. It is almost impossible for the West to realize how close and strong family ties are in the Orient. Separation meant an unusual, sad break in holiest ties. God was trying a new step in His fight against sin. He had separated the leader of sin from all others.[1] He had removed all the race except a seed of good.[2] Both of these plans had failed, through man's failure. Now a new, farther-reaching plan is begun. A man is separated from all others, to become the seed of a new nation, a *faith* nation, which should be a different people from others, embodying in themselves God's ideals for all.

Abraham is asked to become a separated man in a peculiar sense, separate outwardly, separate in his worship of the true God, and separate in living a *faith* life. It was to be a life dependent wholly on God regardless of outer circumstance or difficulty. There was a training time of twenty-five years before Abraham was ready for the next step,—the bringing of the next in line of this new faith stock. Separation, then still further separation, an open stand for God in the land of strangers, then a series of close personal tests, each entering into the marrow of his life,—this was the training to get the man ready to be a *faith* father to his son, the next in line of a

[1]Genesis iv. 12-16. [2]Genesis vi. 17, 18.

faith people. And the hardest test of all came after the child of faith had grown to manhood. Then he became a child of faith in his own experience, as well as in his father's. Following meant separation. It meant believing God against the unlikeliest circumstances, against nature itself, hoping in the midst of hopelessness. Everything spelled out "hopelessness." God alone spelled out "hope." He took God against everything else. It meant going to school to God, until he could be used as God planned. And Abraham consented. He followed. He helped God in His need. He befriended God; he became His friend in His need.

But *every* generation needs men. Each new step in the plan needs a new man. In a sore crisis of that plan, long after, another man's name, *Moses,* is known to us, *only* because he singled himself out as being willing to let God use him. In his unconscious training, the training of circumstances into which it was natural to fit, he was peculiarly prepared for the future task. Bred in Egypt as the son of the ruler's household, he received the best school training of his day, with all the peculiar advantages of his position in the royal family.

Following meant more to Moses, in what he gave up of worldly advantage, than to any other named in the Bible record. Egypt was the world empire of that day. Moses was in the innermost imperial circles, and could easily have become the dominant spirit of the court, if not the successor

to the Pharaoh's throne. But he heard the call. His mother helped train his ears. He answered "Yes" to God, without knowing how much was involved. Following meant giving up, then a long course of training in the university of the desert, with the sheep and the stars and—God. It meant a repeated risking of his life not only in his bold dealings with Pharaoh, but afterward with the nation-mob, mob-nation, whose leader, and father and school-teacher, and everything else, he had to be for forty years.

And it meant much on the other side, too.

> "Had Moses failed to go, had God
> Granted his prayer, there would have been
> For him no leadership to win;
> No pillared fire; no magic rod,
> No smiting of the sea; no tears
> Ecstatic, shed on Sinai's steep;
> No Nebo, with a God to keep
> His burial; only forty years
> Of desert, watching with his sheep."

A Yet Deeper Meaning.

When we turn to the leaders of the latter years of the Kingdom time of God's teacher-nation, the prophetic time, there is one thing that stands out sharply in the men God used. It was this, a man's inner personal life and experience were made use of to an unusual degree. It is as though the sacred inner life were sacrificed. The holy privacies were laid bare to the public gaze. The sweets of the inner holy of holies of

the personal life were given up. The people were so far God-hardened that only *acted* preaching, *lived* messages, that took it out of one's very life, with pain in the taking, had any effect.

This is most markedly so in the case of *Hosea,* whose experience it seems almost if not wholly impossible for us to take in.[1] It is true that the Christianized West has conceptions of personal privacy to which the East is a stranger. Yet, even so, the way in which these men were asked to yield up their inner personal lives, must have been a most marked thing to these Orientals. For God used it as the one thing apparently, the extreme thing, to touch their hearts with His appeal.

Isaiah had just such peculiar experiences. The birth of a son is planned for, and told of for the purpose of making more emphatic the message to the dull ears and slow heart of the nation.[2] His two sons bore names of strange meaning, as a means of teaching truths that were peculiarly distasteful to the people. Isaiah takes one of these strangely named sons as he goes to deliver a message to the king. And the son standing by his father's side is a reminder in his name of a disagreeable truth.[3] A little later the man is actually required to go about barefooted, and without clothing sufficient for conventional respectability, and to continue this for three years.[4]

[1] Hosea i. 2-9; iii. 1-3.
[2] Isaiah viii. 1-3.
[3] Isaiah vii. 3-17.
[4] Isaiah xx. 1-4.

When we remember that he was not an erratic extremist, but a sober-minded, fine-grained gentleman of refinement and of a good family, it helps us to understand a little how hard-hearted and stubborn were a people that could be appealed to only in such a way.

And it tells us, too, how utterly surrendered was the man who was willing thus to give up his private personal life. How much easier to have been simply an earnest, eloquent preacher, with his inner personal life lived free from public gaze, a thing sacred to himself. Following meant the giving up of the sacred private life to a strangely marked degree, for God to use.

Even more marked are the experiences that *Jeremiah* was asked and consented to go through. It would seem as though the repeated conspiracies against his life, the repeated imprisonments in vile dungeons dangerous to health and life, and the shame of being put in the public stocks before the rabble, would have been much for God to ask, and for a man to give. But there is something that goes much farther and deeper into the very marrow of his life than these. He is bidden not to marry, not to have a family life of his own.[1] And he obeyed. This was to be so only and solely as a message to the people. A message couched in such startling language they might listen to. Again we must remember the Oriental setting to appreciate the significance of this. In the East the unit of society is not the

[1] Jeremiah xvi. 1-4.

individual but the *family*. A man's marriage is planned for by the family, as a means of building up the family. To be childless and especially sonless was felt to be peculiarly unfortunate, almost bordering on disgrace.

This meant for Jeremiah not only the loss of personal joys and delights, but that his line would be broken off from his father's family. He would be without heir, or future, in the family history. So following meant going yet deeper into the inner personal life, for the sake of God's plan. This giant's strength is revealed in nothing more than in his tear-wet laments over his people. And he gave all this strength to following. He said "Yes" to God's need and request, though it must have taken his very life to say it.

But *Ezekiel* was asked to do something even beyond this. He was the messenger of God to the colony of Hebrew exiles in Assyria. His accounts of the visions of God reveal a remarkable power of detailed description, and a remarkably strong mentality. Strange to say, these people in captivity are yet harder to reach than were their fathers in their native land. Yet, not strange, for the human heart is the same when it won't open to the purifying of the upper currents of air. Here the man himself literally became the message. He actually lay upon his left side for thirteen months and then on his right side for six weeks longer.

During all that time he ate food that was particularly repugnant, and it was carefully weighed

out, and the water as carefully measured out for his use. He had to rise, no doubt, for various reasons, but the bulk of the time for nearly fifteen months he lay out where all could see him. His fellow-exiles, I suppose, looked and wondered, laughed and gossiped perhaps, and then as time wore on, they thought and thought more, and were awed as they began slowly to take in the meaning of this strange message of God. Thereafter Ezekiel was the leader, to whose house the leaders of the colony came, and to whose words they intently listened.

But there was a yet deeper meaning to following than we have found yet. It is a meaning that awes one's heart into amazed silence. He was married. His wife is spoken of very tenderly as "the desire of thine eyes." He was told that she would be taken away out of his life. She would die. That was the great thing. Then he was not to mourn outwardly for her; this was the second thing. He was to be before the people as though the greatest sorrow of his life had not happened. Is it any wonder the people came astonished to know what this meant? The simple brevity with which he tells of the occurrence takes hold of one's heart. "So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded."[1] There was no questioning, no hesitancy of action, but a simple, prompt obedience, even though his heart was breaking.

[1] Ezekiel xxiv. 15-19.

This was what God asked of him. God needed this in His dealings with these people of His in whom His world-plan centred. How desperate must have been the need that called for such an experience as this! Ezekiel said "Yes" even to this. Surely there was here some of that Calvary meaning, of the secondary sort, of which we have spoken together. Following meant not only giving his personality and life, but now it meant giving what must have been more than life itself.

Through Fire.

To *Daniel* following meant something essentially different. He was not a messenger to his own people, nor their leader. He was a messenger to the great world-rulers of his time, through the visions he interpreted, and through his unbending faithfulness and purity of life. The thing that stands out largest is the life he lived, a life of simplicity in habit, of purity and consistency, with an unwavering faith in God. God *could* use him to speak to the great emperors. So he helped God to get His message to men so hard to reach through a human channel.

Following meant a pure life. It was Daniel's insistence on being pure and true that shut him up with the wild beasts. And it was through his unflinching fidelity and persistence that God could send His message anew, in the most public manner, out to all the millions of that great world-empire. Following meant to a marked de-

gree a pure life as the basis of the service rendered. It proved to mean a lions' den, *and* the power of God overcoming the instincts of ravenous beasts. But clear beyond these it meant that God could reach His world with His message to an unusual extent.

Daniel's three companions helped God by means of a most thrilling experience, a really terrible experience. God had been pleading with the great Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel's message. Now He wants to speak again in a way that will compel attention. He needs these three young men. They consent to be His messengers. It meant going through a terrible ordeal. They simply remained true in their personal devotion to God. This was the thing God needed, and used. Everything of use to God roots down in the life. The personal plea of the great king, and the prospect of a horrible death fail alike to move them. They probably had quite resigned themselves to the fate of being burned alive for the truth. But God had a different purpose. He was thinking about this ruler with whom He dealt so personally and unusually, time and again.

The three men, walking quietly up and down in the seven-times heated furnace in company with a glorious looking person "like a son of the gods"—this was the message God wanted spoken to the ruler He was pleading with. His strangely marvellous power, and His personal regard for His faithful followers—this was what God was trying to say to Nebuchadnezzar. He asked the

use of these three young men. Their personal loyalty to Himself even unto death—this was what He wanted. *Through* this He reached the heart of the man He was after.

The experience of these men is an intensely interesting study. It was a fearful ordeal that they went through. Yet it was wholly mental, and of the spirit. They suffered no pain of body, nor inconvenience. The fire only made them free, burned up the bonds that held them. It took great strength of will, of decision, to stay steady through all the fearful test. Yet *nothing happened to their bodies* except to help them. God took care of that. They gave Him what He asked. He gave them more than they expected. They probably expected death and were willing. God had a deeper plan He was working out. How glad they must have been that they followed fully, that they didn't disappoint God.

Following meant simply being true, even though the road led through a furnace. God would attend to the furnace. Their part was simply to follow where He led. And our God is needing just such acted messages to-day. He is longing for just such opportunities to reveal His power and love, not merely *to us,* but through us to His world.

Let us take time for one more of these faithful followers. This time it is a young woman. It is at the most critical juncture of God's plan, thus far. He needed a woman whom He could use to bring His Son, and could use further to

mother that Son's early years. All unconsciously Mary of Nazareth and of Bethlehem was fitting into His plan in her life, her simple, pure, godly, personal life. We can understand that God wooed her especially to such a life of heart devotion as a preparation for the after part. And she said "Yes" to all His wooings, never suspecting what was to come of it. You never know how much a simple "Yes" to God may mean, *or* a "No." You never know how much of service may grow out of the true life. Yet all true service is something coming out of the life.

Then the plan of God was made known to her, —the marvellous plan, yet so simple to Him. And again she said a simple, awed "Yes." She waits only long enough to ask the natural, woman's question as to method. There was no questioning of God's power, what He could do, and would do. It came to mean hurting suspicion, peculiarly hurting to as pure and gentle a soul as she. Apparently this was unavoidable. It speaks volumes for her openness of both mind and heart to God, that she instantly took in Gabriel's meaning, and could take it in that such an unprecedented thing was possible. It would have saved her the cruel suspicion if Joseph had been told beforehand, but the whole probability is that he could not have taken it in that such a thing was possible.

Following meant the glad "Yes" to the early wooing up to a pure devoted life. It meant saying a further "Yes" to the plan of God even

though something so unusual, and with it the misunderstanding and cruel suspicion, on the one point most sensitive to a woman, and by the one nearest her. But she said " Yes " both times. She let God have the use of her life for His plan. That was all He asked. That is all He asks. But that is what He asks.

These are a few of the glorious company of followers, the goodly fellowship of those who have helped God in His passionate plan for His world, the noble army of willing ones. But the number is incomplete. The plan is not yet fully worked out. The need is not yet wholly met. It was never more urgent. To-day the insistent voice still comes as of old, asking you and me to follow.

And no one can tell how much *his* following may mean to God in reaching His world.

THE GLORY OF THE GOAL,— FACE TO FACE

"With You Always."

Have you ever *seen Christ?* No, I don't mean have you been to some uplifting convention, and been tremendously caught by some talented, earnest speaker, and been swayed by the atmosphere of the hour and place, and felt that all was not just as it should be with you; and then you prayed more, and made some new resolves, or re-made some old ones, and left off some things, and put on some things; I don't mean that, but this—have you ever *seen Christ?*

No, of course, you don't see Him with these outer eyes. Well, then just what do I mean practically? *This*—has there come to you a real sense of Himself? of His presence? of the tremendous plea His presence makes? and, possibly, you don't know just how to answer. You say, "I'm not just sure," or "How can I know?" Well, you'll never say it that way, nor ask that question again after the experience has come.

May I tell you a little bit about it? Yet, mark you, only "a little bit." You can never *tell* another one what it means to see *Him.* When once the sight has come, every word you utter

about it, or Him, seems so lame and weak that you despair of ever being able to let out at your lips what has gotten into you. But let me try, even if lamely, in the eager yearning that it may help you know if, thus far, you have missed seeing *Him,* and maybe—so much better—help you to *see* Him. For until you have—well, nothing, absolutely nothing, is worth while.

When you see Him there comes such a sense of *His purity* that, instantly, you are down on your face in utter despair, because of your own self—your impurity; your lack of purity; the sharp contrast between Him and you. You feel that young Isaiah's outcry in the temple that morning is wholly inadequate. "Unclean lips," is it? Why, the whole thing, from innermost recesses clear through and out, is unclean. Then it dawns upon you that this is really what Isaiah is feeling and trying to express in his "woe" and "undone."

And that vivid sense of contrast between Him and you never grows less, but more acute and deeper. Even when you come to know Him better, and the sweet peace comes with its untellable balm to your spirit, yet you are always conscious of the contrast, and you know that *you* are not pure; only *He* is; and all you can do is to keep under the cleansing stream of His blood, very low down.

"Never higher than His piercèd feet,
Never farther than His bleeding side."

With that comes such a sense of *Himself,* of His—what word can tell it?—His glory,—which means simply His character, what He is in Himself—that again words can never tell out the sense of your own littleness; no, that is not the word, your own *nothingness.* And now you recall, with an inner shrinking, how well you have thought of yourself, how much you have talked about yourself and your view of things, perhaps in the language of a properly phrased humility. Now you are dumb. His presence dumbs you. You begin to wonder at the strange self-confidence and self-complacence that have been so common even in your holiest moments and experiences. It seems, in this Presence, as though you could never open your lips again—except to speak of *Him.*

Then your eyes are drawn more intently to His person,—His face, His wounds. The scars where the thorns tore His great, patient face; the grief-whitened hair, draped above those deep, tender, unspeakable eyes; that strangely rough place in the palm so lovingly outstretched; the spear-scar, the nail-marks in those feet coming over to you,—these grip you. Their meaning begins to come. There's cleansing; yes, blessed fact! there's *cleansing* from this horrid impurity whose stain you are so conscious of. Yet, what it cost Him! What my impurity forced upon Him! Yes, cleansed; blessed Jesus! What a relief to be cleansed! Yet I must *stay* under the stream; only so can the sense of relief be con-

tinual. And I must stay down on my face at His feet. It is the only place for such as I discover myself to be. Yet what grace to let me stay at His feet!

Have you *seen Christ?* This is what begins to come when you have—His purity, your contrasted lack; His glorious self, your own nothingness in yourself; His suffering—the price of your cleansing. This is only a beginning, yet a beginning that comes to be the continuous thing.

Closer Acquaintance.

After a little, as you are sitting still in His presence, and have become a bit quieter after that flush of first emotions at seeing Him, you begin to be caught all anew with how *lovable* He is. This takes great hold of you. I overheard a once-drunken, now thoroughly changed man, up in Scotland, as he was fairly pouring out his heart in prayer in his sweet, broad Scotch,—"Once Thou didst have no form or comeliness to me, but now"—and it seemed as if all the pent-up feelings within rushed at once to flood-tide—"*now* Thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, and the One altogether lovely." And the high-water mark of the flood was touched on "chiefest" and "altogether."

That first look made you think mostly of yourself—an inner loathing. Now you think of *Him.* He is so lovable, so true and tender, and patient and pure; again your language gives out, and

you feel better content just to look without trying to use words. They're such poor things when it comes to telling about Him. He is so much more than anything that can be said about Him. His will is so wise and thoughtful and far-reaching and loving. Strange how stupid you have been in insisting so strenuously and blindly on having your own way. His plan, His thought about everything concerning you, is so superb. And He asks me to be His follower. What joy! What if the way be a bit rough; it's following *Him;* that's enough. He calls me to be His personal friend. I can hardly take it in,—His *friend?* Yes, that's His own word. Well, let any thorns tear because of the narrowing of the road; I'm His friend, man, do you hear? His *friend,*—do you get hold of that word? What can any thorn thing do against that!

"We" may go hand in hand now,—His is pierced; I feel the scar where our hands touch. But we're together at last, *the* thing He has been working for. I can feel His presence. I can hear the low music of His voice within. Thorns don't count here. Oh, yes, I *feel* them; they haven't lost their power to slash and sting,—but —with *Him* so close alongside!—Wondrous Christ, here I am at Thy feet, Thy glad slave forever. I'm wholly Thine. It's my own choice. I'll never go any other way by Thy grace. This is the second bit that comes, the glad surrender of life to His mastery. Do you know about this? You will, when you've *seen Christ.*

Then you come to know, without being able to tell just how, that He is not only *with* you, but *within* you. At first His presence may have seemed as something outside yourself. You were looking away at some One who was looking at you. And His look at you broke your heart, and made your will, once so strangely strong in itself, now as strangely pliable to His as only a strong will can be. But now He is living within you. You may not be clear just how the change came. But you do know that there's a something which you come to know is a some One, who is within. His presence is peace past understanding, but not past appreciation. There's a longing for His Word, a desire to talk with Him even when you don't want to ask for something, a deep heart-cry for purity, a burning within to please Him. These all seem to come from Him, and at the same time to be satisfied by Himself, even while they remain and increase.

And yet more, while this Presence within seems so quietly real and exquisitely peace-bringing, there is still the outer presence, the One whose presence it was at the first that brought all this change. Two presences, one above, enthroned there; one within, enthroned there; yet they seem the same, as though one personality with two presences had come into your consciousness. There's the Lord Jesus above at the Father's right hand; here's the Holy Spirit within at my right hand,[1] yet in practical

[1] Psalm xvi. 8.

effect they are as one, while one's thought is always directed to the Lord Jesus both within and above.

The Presence within makes you think wholly of the Presence above, who yet seems also to be within. You are getting a taste of the practical meaning of the Trinity now, three that in effect are as one. But you are too much taken up with the gladness of it to think about the metaphysics of it. He—whether within, or above, or both—is so much more than words. The experience is so much more than any explanation. You are not concerned about the explanation so long as you can have the sweet experience.

The Final Goal.

This is the third bit that comes when you've seen Christ, the gracious indwelling of the Lord Jesus' other self, the Holy Spirit. But if you have seen Him, you are probably not counting steps nor analyzing processes, but just singing a bit of joyous praise to Him.

Then there's *the outer turn; He* does that. He draws you to Himself, and yet at the same time sends you away—no, not *from* Him—*for* Him, out to the others He hungers after, even as after you. Up, in, out,—so He draws and directs, up to Himself, in by contrast to one's self with a holding hard to Him while looking within, then a sending out to the others. He kindles a fire, He is a fire, drawing, burning, cleansing, warming,

then driving you forth, and doing all at the same time. Wondrous fine, this fire of love—of His heart—of Himself. The common word for this is "service." The word doesn't matter much. Service is a good word. But the thing that comes seems so much more than this word seems to contain.

That hand that was pierced, which has been to you so tender and warm, and in its clasp so expressive of this wondrous friendship—that hand now leads you where you had not thought of going. *And you go,*—aghast almost at first at the radical change in your carefully worked out plans, losing your breath for a moment as you wonder what "they" *will* think (though "they" never will *understand,* unless—ah, yes, unless they see *Him*). That hand reaches in where your life touches others, in the family, the business circle, the social circle, and moulds you over anew in the old relationships, not taking you away from them (though there may be some partings), but making you a new presence in the midst of them.

That hand reaches into your pocket, and your safety-deposit box, in among the title papers and securities, and shakes off the dust and rust, and sends them out on an errand after the others. That fire—Himself—draws all into the smelting-pot. Its alchemy transmutes possessions into lives, redeemed, sweetened, Jesus-touched, Christ-renewed lives, made like Himself. And the sweet music of their new lives comes up into *His*

gladdened ears, and a few of the strains come to cheer you. One may have at first a strange feeling of bareness, for things that we've always clung to as essential have gone out from us to others. But with the outgoing of things has come an incoming of *Himself*, in greater abundance than we dreamed possible. He, within, completely overbalances what He has sent out from us into use. *He*—He is *everything*.

The usual word for all this is "service," a blessed word. Yet service seems to suggest your doing something for Him among others. This is quite different. It is *His* doing something *with* you for others. The thing itself is so much more than any word. Christ is so much more than anything you say about Him. The truth is always less than Himself. But one never understands how much that means till he has seen Christ. Have *you* seen Christ? Then others shall see Him, too, in you, and through you.

This is the glory of the goal—face to face with Himself. It begins now. It is a very real thing. This is a bit of the meaning of that mountain beatitude, "the pure in heart . . . shall *see God*." Yet only he who sees understands what seeing means. The subtle intensity of God's presence cannot be explained, only understood by the purified in heart. Only the opened eyes see.

But this is only a beginning. There will be the far greater glory of the final goal, as we come into His immediate presence, literally face to

face. That may be when we are called away from the lower road up to the higher reaches, above the clouds and the blue, the glory-reaches, up where He now sits. It may be by that goal coming nearer, by Himself actually coming on the clouds in great glory, for His own and for the next chapter in His great world-plan. Then we shall be caught up into His presence. Then we shall be fully like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

And we shall be sharers in His glory, in the Kingdom time of glad earth service. But we shall be thinking only of Himself—face to face.

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